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MEN OF THE BIBLE

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MEN OF THE BIBLE

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Men of the Bible

ABRAHAM'S FOUR SURRENDERS

A great many people are afraid of the will of God, and yet I believe that one of the sweetest lessons that we can learn in the school of Christ is the surrender of our wills to God, letting Him plan for us and rule our lives. If I know my own mind, if an angel should come from the throne of God and tell me that I could have my will done the rest of my days on earth, and that everything I wished should be carried out, or that I might refer it back to God, and let God's will be done in me and through me, I think in an instant I would say:

"Let the will of God be done."

I cannot look into the future. I do not know what is going to happen to-morrow; in fact, I do not know what may happen before night; so I cannot choose for myself as well as God can choose for me, and it is much better to surrender my will to God's will. Abraham found this out, and I want to call your attention to four surrenders that he was called to make. I think that they give us a pretty good key to his life.

I

In the first place, Abraham was called to give up *his kindred and his native country*, and to go out, not knowing whither he went.

While men were busy building up Babylon, God called this man out of that nation of the Chaldeans. He lived down near the mouth of the Euphrates, perhaps three hundred miles south of Babylon, when he was called to go into a land that he perhaps had never heard of before, and to possess that land.

In the twelfth chapter of Genesis, the first four verses, we read:

"Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee." Now notice the promise: "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy five years old and when he departed out of Haran."

It was several years before this that God first told him to leave Ur of the Chaldees. Then he came to Haran, which is about half-way between the valley of the Euphrates and the valley of the Jordan. God had called him into the land of the Canaanite, and

HE CAME HALF-WAY,

and stayed there—we do not know just how long, but probably about five years.

Now, I believe that there are a great many Christians who are what might be called *Haran Christians.* They go to Haran, and there they stay. They only half obey. They are not out-and-out. How was it that God got him out of Haran? His father died. The

first call was to leave Ur of the Chaldees and go into Canaan, but instead of going all the way they stopped half-way, and it was affliction that drove Abram out of Haran. A great many of us bring afflictions on ourselves, because we are not out-and-out for the Lord. We do not obey Him fully. God had plans He wanted to work out through Abram, and He could not work them out as long as he was there at Haran. Affliction came, and then we find that he left Haran, and started for the Promised Land.

There is just one word there about Lot—"and Lot went with Abram." That is the key, you might say, to Lot's life. He was a weaker character than Abram, and he followed his uncle.

When they got into the land that God had promised to give him, Abram found it already inhabited by great and warlike nations—not by one nation, but by a number of nations. What could he do, a solitary man, in that land? Not only was his faith tested by finding the land pre-occupied by other strong and hostile nations, but he had not been there a great while before a great famine came upon him. No doubt a great conflict was going on in his breast, and he said to himself:

"What does this mean? Here I am, thirteen hundred miles away from my own land, and surrounded by a warlike people. And not only that, but a famine has come, and I must get out of this country."

Now, I don't believe that God sent Abram down to Egypt. I think that He was only testing him, that he might in his darkness and in his trouble be

DRAWN NEARER TO GOD.

I believe that many a time trouble and sorrow are permitted to come to us that we may see the face of God,

and be shut up to trust in Him alone. But Abram went down into Egypt, and there he got into trouble by denying his wife. That is the blackest spot on Abram's character. But when we get into Egypt we will always be getting into trouble.

II

Abram became rich; but we don't hear of any altar —in fact, we hear of no altar at Haran, and we hear of no altar in Egypt. When he came up with Lot out of Egypt, they had great possessions, and they increased in wealth, and their herds had multiplied, until there was a strife among their herdsmen.

Now it is that Abram's character shines out again. He might have said that he had a right to the best of everything, because he was the older, and because Lot would probably not have been worth anything if it had not been for Abram's help. But instead of standing up for *his rights*, to choose the best of the land, he surrenders them, and says to the nephew:

"Take your choice. If you go to the right hand, I will take the left; or if you prefer the left hand, then I will go to the right."

Here is where Lot made his mistake. If there was a man under the sun that needed Abram's counsel, and Abram's prayers, and Abram's influence, and to have been surrounded by the friends of Abram, it was Lot. He was just one of those weak characters that

NEEDED BOLSTERING UP.

But his covetous eye looked upon the well-watered plains of the valley of the Jordan that reached out towards Sodom, and he chose them. He was influenced by what he saw. He walked by sight,

instead of by faith. I think that is where a great many Christian people make their mistake—walking by sight, instead of by faith. If he had stopped to think, Lot might have known that it would be disastrous to him and his family to go anywhere near Sodom. Abram and Lot must both have known about the wickedness of those cities on the plains, and although they were rich, and there was chance of making money, it was better for Lot to keep his family out of that wicked city. But his eyes fell upon the well-watered plains, and he pitched his tent towards Sodom, and separated from Abram.

Now, notice that after Abram had let Lot have his choice, and Lot had gone off to the plains, for the first time God had Abram alone. His father had died at Haran, and he had left his brother there. Now, after his nephew had left him, he moved down to Hebron, and there built an altar. "Hebron" means *communion*. Here it is that God came to him and said:

"Abram, look around as far as your eye can reach—it is all yours. Look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee."

"Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the Lord."

It is astonishing how far you can see in that country. God took Moses up on Pisgah and showed him the

Promised Land. In Palestine, a few years ago, I found that on Mount Olivet I could look over and see the Mediterranean. I could look into the valley of the Jordan, and see the Dead Sea. And on the plains of Sharon I could look up to Mount Lebanon, and up at Mount Hermon, away beyond Nazareth. You can see with the naked eye almost the length and breadth of that country. So when God said to Abram that he might look to the north, and that as far as he could see he could have the land; and then look to the south, with its well-watered plains that Lot coveted, and to the east and the west, from the sea to the Euphrates—then God gave His friend Abram a clear title, no conditions whatever, saying:

"I will give it all to you."

Lot chose all he could get, but it was not much. Abram let God choose for him, and was given all the land. Lot had no security for his choice, and soon lost all. Abram's right was maintained undisputed by God the giver.

Do you know that the children of Israel never had faith enough to take possession of all that land as far as the Euphrates? If they had, probably Nebuchadnezzar would never have come and taken them captives. But that was God's offer; He said to Abram, "Unto your seed I will give it forever, clear to the valley of the Euphrates." From that time on God enlarged Abram's tents. He enriched His promises, and gave him much more that He had promised down there in the valley of the Euphrates when He first called him out. It is very interesting to see how God kept

ADDING TO THE PROMISE

for the benefit of His friend Abram.

Let us go back a moment to Lot, and see what Lot

gained by making that choice. I believe that you can find five thousand Lots to one Abram to-day. People are constantly walking by sight, lured by the temptations of men and of the world. Men are very anxious to get their sons into lucrative positions, although it way be disastrous to their character; it may ruin them morally and religiously, and in every other way. The glitter of this world seems to attract them. Some one has said that Abram was a far-sighted man, and Lot was a short-sighted man; his eye fell on the land right around him. There is the one thing that we are quite sure of—he was so short-sighted that his possessions soon left him. And you will find that these people who are constantly building for time are disappointed.

I have no doubt that the men of Sodom said that Lot was

A MUCH SHREWDER MAN

than his uncle Abram, and that if he lived twenty-five years he would be the richer of the two, and that by coming into Sodom he could sell his cattle and sheep and goats and whatever else he had for large sums, and could get a good deal better market than Abram could back there on the plains of Mamre.

For awhile Lot did make money very fast, and became a very successful man. If you had gone into Sodom a little while before destruction came, you would have found that Lot owned some of the best corner lots in town, and that Mrs. Lot moved in what they called the *bon-ton* society or upper ten; and you would have found that she was at the theatre two or three nights in the week. If they had progressive euchre, she could play as well as anybody; and her

daughters could dance as well as any other Sodomites. We find Lot sitting in the gates, he was getting on amazingly well. He might have been one of the principal men in the city; Judge Lot, or the Honorable Lot of Sodom. If there had been a Congress in those days, they would have run him for a seat in Congress. They might have elected him

MAYOR OF SODOM.

He was getting on amazingly well; wonderfully prosperous.

But by and by there comes a war. If you go into Sodom, you must take Sodom's judgment when it comes, for it is bound to come. The battle turned against those five cities of the plain and they took Lot and his wife and all that they had, and one man escaped and ran off to Hebron and told Abram what had taken place. Abram took his servants,—three hundred and eighteen of them,—went after these victorious kings, and soon returned with all the booty and all the prisoners.

III

On Abram's way back with the spoils one of the strangest scenes of history occurs. Whom should he meet but Melchizedek, who brought out bread and wine; and the priestly king blessed the Father of the Faithful. After the old king of peace had blest him, he met the King of Sodom, and the King of Sodom said, "You take the money, and I will take the people"; but Abram replied:

"Not a thing will I take, not even the shoe-latchets, lest thou shouldst say, I have made Abram rich."

There is another surrender. There was a temptation *to get rich at the hands of the King of Sodom.* But the King of Salem had blessed him, and this world did not tempt him. It tempted Lot, and no doubt Lot thought Abram made a great mistake when he refused to take this wealth; but Abram would not touch a thing; he spurned it and turned from it. He had the world under his feet; he was living for another world. He would not be enriched from such a source.

Every one of us is met by the prince of this world and the Prince of Peace. The one tempts us with wealth, pleasure, ambition: but our Prince and Priest is ready to succor and strengthen us in the hour of temptation.

A friend of mine told me some years ago that his wife was very fond of painting, but that for a long time he never could see any beauty in her paintings; they all looked like a daub to him. One day his eyes troubled him and he went to see an oculist. The man looked in amazement at him and said:

"You have what we call a short eye and a long eye, and that makes everything a blur."

He gave him some glasses that just fitted him, and then he could see clearly. Then, he said, he understood why it was that his wife was so carried away with art, and he built an art gallery, and filled it full of beautiful things, because everything looked so beautiful after he had had his eyes straightened out.

Now there are lots of people that have

A LONG EYE AND A SHORT EYE,

and they make miserable work of their Christian life. They keep one eye on the eternal city and the other

eye on the well-watered plains of Sodom. That was the way it was with Lot: he had a short eye and a long eye. It would be pretty hard work to believe that Lot was saved if it were not for the New Testament. But there we read that "Lot's righteous soul was vexed," —so he had a righteous soul, but he had a stormy time. He didn't have peace and joy and victory like Abram.

After Abram had given up the wealth of Sodom that was offered him, then God came and enlarged his borders again—enlarged the promise. God said:

"I will be your exceeding great reward; I will protect you."

Abram might have thought that these kings that he had defeated might get other kings and other armies to come, and he might have thought of himself as a solitary man, with only three hundred and eighteen men, so that he might have feared lest he be swept from the face of the earth. But the Lord came and said:

"Abram, fear not."

That is the first time those oft-repeated words, "fear not," occur in the Bible.

"Fear not, for I will be your shield and your reward."

I would rather have that promise than all the armies of earth and all the navies of the world to protect me—to have the God of heaven for my Protector. God was teaching Abram that He was to be his Friend and his Shield, if he would surrender himself wholly to His keeping, and trust in His goodness. That is what we want—to surrender ourselves up to God, fully and wholly.

In Colorado the superintendent of some works told

me of a miner that was promoted, who came to the superintendent, and said:

"There is a man that has seven children, and I have only three, and he is having a hard struggle. Don't promote me, but promote him."

I know of nothing that speaks louder for Christ and Christianity than to see a man or woman giving up what they call their rights for others, and "in honor preferring one another."

We find that Abram was constantly surrendering his own selfish interests and trusting to God. What was the result? Of all the men that ever lived he is the most renowned. He never did anything the world would call great. The largest army he ever mustered was three hundred and eighteen men. How Alexander would have sneered at such an army as that! How Cæsar would have looked down on such an army! How Napoleon would have curled his lip as he thought of Abram with an army of three hundred and eighteen! We are not told that he was a great astronomer; we are not told that he was a great scientist; we are not told that he was a great statesman, or anything the world calls great; but there was one thing he could do —he could live an unselfish life, and in honor could waive his rights, and in that way he became the friend of God; in that way he has become immortal. There is

NO NAME IN HISTORY

so well known as the name of Abram. Even Christ is not more widely known, for the Mohammedans, the Persians, and the Egyptians make a great deal of Abram. His name has been for centuries and centuries favorably known in Damascus. God promised

him that great men, and warriors, and kings, and emperors, should spring from his loins. Was there ever a nation that has turned out such men? Think of Moses, and Joseph, and Joshua, and Caleb, and Samuel, and David, and Solomon, and Elisha. Think of Elijah, and Daniel, and Isaiah, and all the other wonderful Bible characters that have sprung from this man! Then think of Peter, of James, and John, and Paul, and John the Baptist, a mighty army. No man can number the multitude of wonderful men that have sprung from this one man called out of the land of the Chaldeans, unknown and an idolater, probably, when God called him; and yet how literally God has fulfiled His promise that through him He would bless all the nations of the earth. All because he surrendered himself fully and wholly to let God bless him.

IV

The last surrender is perhaps the most touching and the hardest of all to understand. Perhaps he could not have borne it until the evening of life. God had been taking him along, step by step, until now he had reached a place where he had learned to obey fully whatever God told him to do. I believe the world has yet to see what God will do with the man who is perfectly surrendered. Next to God's own Son, Abraham was perhaps the man who came nearest to this standard.

FOR TWENTY-FIVE YEARS

Abraham had been in the Promised Land without the promised heir. God had promised that He would bless all the nations of the earth through him, and yet He did not give him a son. Abraham's faith almost

staggered a number of times. Ishmael was born, but God set aside the son of the bondwoman, for he was not to be the ancestor of the Son of God. God was setting Abram apart simply that He might prepare the way for His own Son, and now, at last, a messenger comes down from heaven to Hebron, and tells Abraham in his old age that he should have a son.

It seemed too good to be true. He had hard work to believe it; but at the appointed time Isaac was born into that family. I don't believe there was ever a child born into the world that caused so much joy in the home as in Abraham's heart and home. How Abraham and that old mother, Sarah, must have doted on that child! How their eyes feasted on him!

But just when the lad was growing up into manhodo Abraham received another very strange command, and there was another surrender—*his only son.* Perhaps he was making an idol of that boy, and thought more of him than he did of the God that gave him. There must be no idol in the heart if we are going to do the will of God on earth.

I can imagine that one night the old patriarch retired worn out and weary. The boy had gone fast to sleep, when suddenly a heavenly messenger came and told him that he must take that boy off on to a mountain that God was to show him, and offer him up as a sacrifice. No more sleep that night! If you had looked into that tent the next morning I can imagine that you would have seen the servants flying round and making preparations for the master's taking a long journey. He perhaps keeps the secret locked up in his heart, and he doesn't tell even Sarah or Isaac. He doesn't tell the servants, even the faithful servant

Eliezer, what is to take place. About nine o'clock you might have seen those four men—Abraham, Isaac and the two young men with them—start off on the long journey. Once in a while Abraham turns his head aside and wipes away the tear. He doesn't want Isaac to see what a terrible struggle is going on within. It is a hard battle to give up his will and to surrender that boy, the idol of his life. Oh, how he loved him!

I can imagine the first night. The boy soon falls asleep, tired and weary with the hot day's journey, but the old man doesn't sleep. I can see him look into the face of the innocent boy, and say:

"Soon my boy will be gone, and I will be returning without him."

Perhaps most of the night his voice could have been heard in prayer, as he cries to God to help him; and as God had helped him in the past so God was helping him that night.

The next day they journeyed on, and again a terrible conflict goes on. Again he brushes away the tear. Perhaps Isaac sees it, and says:

"Father is going away to meet his God, and the angels may come down and talk with him as at Hebron. That is what he is so agitated about."

The second night comes, and the old man looks into that face every hour of the night. He sleeps a little, but not much, and the next morning at family worship he breaks down. He cannot finish his prayer.

They journey on that day—it is a long day—and the old patriarch say: "This is the last day I am to have my boy with me. To-morrow I must offer him up; to-morrow I shall be without the son of my bosom."

The third night comes, and what a night it must

have been! I can imagine he didn't eat or sleep that night. Nothing is going to break his fast, and every hour of the night he goes to look into the face of that boy, and once in a while he bends over and kisses him, and he says:

"O Isaac, how can I give thee up?"

Morning breaks. What a morning it must have been for that father! He doesn't eat; he tries to pray, but his voice falters. After breakfast they start on their journey again. He has not gone a great way before he lifts up his eyes, and yonder is Mount Moriah. His heart begins to beat quickly. He says to the two young men:

"You stay here, and I will go yonder with my son."

Then, as father and son went up Mount Moriah, with the wood, and the fire, and the knife, the boy turns suddenly to the father, and says:

"Father, where is the lamb? We haven't any offering, father."

It was a common thing for Isaac to see his father offer up a victim, but there is no lamb now.

Did you ever think

HOW PROPHETIC THAT ANSWER WAS

when Abraham turned and said to the son, "God will provide Himself a sacrifice"? I don't know that Abraham understood the full meaning of it, but a few hundred years after God did provide a sacrifice right there. Mount Moriah and Mount Calvary are close together, and God's Son was provided as a sacrifice for the world.

On Mount Moriah this father and son begin to roll up the stones, and together they build the altar; then they lay on the wood and everything is ready for the victim. Isaac looks around to see where the lamb is,

and then the father can keep it from the son no longer, and he says:

"My boy, sit down here close to the altar, and let me tell you something."

Then perhaps that old, white-haired patriarch puts his arm around the lad, and tells how God came to him in the land of the Chaldeans, and the story of his whole life, and how, by one promise after another, God had kept enlarging the promised blessings, and that He would bless all the nations of the earth through him. Isaac was to be the heir. But he says:

"My son, the last night I was at home God came to me in the hours of the night and told me to bring you here and offer you up as a sacrifice. I don't understand what it means, but I can tell you one thing: it is much harder for me to offer you up than it would be for me to be sacrificed myself."

There was a time when I used to think more of the love of Jesus Christ than of God the Father. I used to think of God as a stern judge on the throne, from whose wrath Jesus Christ had saved me. It seems to me now I could not have

A FALSER IDEA OF GOD

than that. Since I have become a father I have made this discovery: that it takes more love and self-sacrifice for the father to give up the son than it does for the son to die. Is a father on earth a true father that would not rather suffer than to see his child suffer? Do you think that it did not cost God something to redeem this world? It cost God the most precious possession He ever had. When God gave His Son, He gave all, and yet He gave Him freely for you and me.

I can imagine that Abraham talks to Isaac and tells

him how hard it is to offer him up. "But God has commanded it," he says, "and I surrender my will to God's will. I don't understand it, but I believe that God will be able to raise you up, and maybe He will."

They fell on their faces, and prayed together. After prayer I can see that old father take his boy to his bosom, and embrace him for the last time. He kisses and kisses him. Then he takes those hands that are so innocent, and binds them, and he binds the feet, and he ties him up, and lays him on the altar, and gives him a last kiss. Then he takes the knife, and raises his hand. No sooner is the hand lifted than a voice calls from heaven:

"Abraham, Abraham, spare thy son!"

You remember that Christ said, "Abraham saw my day, and was glad." I have an idea that God then and there just

LIFTED THE CURTAIN OF TIME

for Abraham. He looked down into the future, saw God's Son coming up Calvary, bearing his sins and the sins of all posterity. God gave him that secret, and told him how His Son was to come into the world and take away his sins.

Now, my friends, notice: whenever God has been calling me to higher service, there has always been a conflict with my will. I have fought against it, but God's will has been done instead of mine. When I came to Jesus Christ, I had a terrible battle to surrender my will, and to take God's will. When I gave up business, I had another battle for three months; I fought against it. It was a terrible battle. But oh! how many times I have thanked God that I gave up my will and took God's will. Then there was another

time when God was calling me into higher service, to go out and preach the gospel all over the land, instead of staying in Chicago. I fought against it for months; but the best thing I ever did was when I surrendered my will, and let the will of God be done in me. Because Abraham obeyed God and held back not even his only child, God enlarged his promises once again:

"And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, and said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice."

If you take my advice, you will have no will other than God's will. Make a full and complete surrender, and the sweet messages of heaven will come to you. God will whisper into your soul

THE SECRETS OF HEAVEN.

After Abraham did what God told him, then it was that God told His friend all about His Son. If we make a full surrender, God will give us something better than we have ever known before. We will get a new vision of Jesus Christ, and will thank God not only in this life but in the life to come. May God help each and every one of us to make a full and complete and unconditional surrender to God, fully and wholly, now and forever.

THE CALL OF MOSES

There is a great deal more room given in Scripture to the *call* of men to God's work than there is to their *end*. For instance, we don't know where Isaiah died, or how he died, but we know a great deal about the call God gave him, when he saw God on high and lifted up on His throne. I suppose that it is true to-day that hundreds of young men and women who are listening for a call and really want to know what their life's mission is, perhaps find it the greatest problem they ever had. Some don't know just what profession or work to take up, and so I should like to take the call of Moses, and see if we cannot draw some lessons from it.

You remember when God met Moses at the burning bush and called him to do as great a work as any man has ever been called to in this world, that

HE THOUGHT THE LORD HAD MADE A MISTAKE,

that he was not the man. He said, "Who am I?" He was very small in his own estimation. Forty years before he had started out as a good many others have started. He thought he was pretty well equipped for service. He had been in the schools of the Egyptians, he had been in the palaces of Egypt, he had moved in the *bon ton* society. He had had all the advantages any man could have when he started out, undoubtedly, without calling on the God of Abraham for wisdom and guidance, yet he broke down.

How many men have started out in some profession

and made a failure of it! They haven't heard the voice of God, they haven't waited upon God for instruction.

I suppose Moses thought that the children of Israel would be greatly honored to know that a prince of the realm was going to take up their cause, but you remember how he lost his temper and killed the Egyptian, and next day, when he interfered in a quarrel between two Hebrews, they wanted to know who hod made him judge and ruler over them, and he had to flee into the desert, and was there for forty years hidden away. He killed the Egyptian and lost his influence thereby. Murder for liberty; wrong for right; it was a poor way to reform abuses, and Moses needed training.

It was a long time for God to keep him in His school, a long time for a man to wait in the prime of his life, from forty to eighty. Moses had been brought us with all the luxuries that Egypt could give him, and now he was a shepherd, and in the sight of the Egyptians a shepherd was an abomination. I have an idea that Moses started out with a great deal bigger head than heart. I believe that is the reason so many fail; they have

BIG HEADS AND LITTLE HEARTS.

If a man has a shriveled-up heart and a big head he is a monster. Perhaps Moses looked down on the Hebrews. There are many people who start out with the idea that they are great and other people are small, and they are going to bring them up on the high level with themselves. God never yet used a man of that stamp. Perhaps Moses was a slow scholar in

God's school, and so He had to keep him there for forty years.

But now he is ready; he is just the man God wants, and God calls him. Moses said, "Who am I?" He was very small in his own eyes—just small enough so that God could use him. If you had asked the Egyptians who he was, they would have said he was

THE BIGGEST FOOL IN THE WORLD.

"Why," they would say, "look at the opportunity that man had! He might have been commander of the Egyptian army, he might have been on the throne, swaying the sceptre over the whole world, if he hadn't identified himself with those poor, miserable Hebrews! Think what an opportunity he has lost, and what a privilege he has thrown away!"

He had dropped out of the public mind for forty years, and they didn't know what had become of him, but God had His eye upon him. He was the very man of all others that God wanted, and when he met God with that question, "Who am I?" it didn't matter who *he* was but who his God was. When men learn the lesson that they are nothing and God is everything, then there is not a position in which God cannot use them. It was not Moses who accomplished that great work of redemption, for he was only the instrument in God's hand. God could have spoken to Pharaoh without Moses. He could have spoken in a voice of thunder, and broken the heart of Pharaoh with one speech, if He had wanted to, but He condescended to take up a human agent, and to use him. He could have sent Gabriel down, but he knew that Moses was the man wanted above all others, so He called him. God uses

men to speak to men: He works through mediators. He could have accomplished the exodus of the children of Israel in a flash, but instead He chose to send a lonely and despised shepherd to work out His purpose through pain and disappointment. That was God's way in the Old Testament, and also in the New. He sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be the mediator between God and man.

Moses went on making excuses and said, "When I go down there, who shall I say has sent me?" I suppose he remembered how he went before he was sent that other time, and he was afraid of a failure again. A man who has made a failure once is always afraid he will make another. He loses confidence in himself. It is a good thing to lose confidence in ourselves so as to gain confidence in God.

The Lord said, "Say unto them, 'I AM hath sent me.'"

Some one has said that God gave him

A BLANK CHECK,

and all he had to do was to fill it out from that time on. When he wanted to bring water out of the rock, all he had to do was to fill out the check; when he wanted bread, all he had to do was to fill out the check and the bread came; he had a rich banker. God had taken him into partnership with Himself. God had made him His heir, and all he had to do was to look up to Him, and he got all he wanted.

And yet he seemed to draw back, and began to make another excuse, and said:

"They will not believe me."

He was afraid of the Israelites as well as of Pharaoh:

he knew how hard it is to get even your friends to believe in you.

Now, if God has sent you and me with a message it is not for us to say whether others will believe it or not. *We* cannot make men believe. If I have been sent by God to make men believe, He will give me power to make them believe. Jesus Christ didn't have that power; it is the work of the Holy Ghost; we cannot persuade men and overcome skepticism and infidelity unless we are baptised with the Holy Ghost and with power.

God told Moses that they *would* believe him, that he would succeed, and bring the children of Israel out of bondage. But Moses seemed to distrust even the God who had spoken to him.

Then the Lord said, "What is that in thy hand?"

He had a rod or staff, a sort of shepherd's crook, which he had cut haphazard when he had wanted something that would serve him in the desert.

"It is only a rod."

"With that you shall deliver the children of Israel; with that rod you shall make Israel believe that I am with you."

When God Almighty linked Himself to that rod, it was worth more than all the armies the world had ever seen. Look and see how that rod did its work. It brought up the plagues of flies, and the thunder storm, and turned the water into blood. It was not Moses, however, nor Moses' rod that did the work, but it was the God of the rod, the God of Moses. As long as God was with him, he could not fail.

Sometimes it looks as if God's servants fail. When Herod beheaded John the Baptist, it looked as if

John's mission was a failure. But was it? The voice that rang through the valley of the Jordan rings through the whole world to-day. You can hear its echo upon the mountains and the valleys yet, "I must decrease, but He must increase." He held up Jesus Christ and introduced Him to the world, and Herod had not power to behead him until his life work had been accomplished. Stephen never preached but one sermon that we know of, and that was before the Sanhedrim; but how that sermon has been preached again and again all over the world! Out of his death probably came Paul, the greatest preacher the world has seen since Christ left this earth. If a man is sent by Jehovah, there is no such thing as failure. Was Christ's life a failure? See how His parables are going through the earth to-day. It looked as if the apostles had made a failure, but see how much has been accomplished. If you read the book of Acts, you will see that every seeming failure in Acts was turned into a great victory. Moses wasn't going to fail, although Pharaoh said with contempt, "Who is God that I should obey Him?" He found out who God was. He found out that there was a God.

But Moses made another excuse, and said, "I am slow of speech, slow of tongue." He said he was

NOT AN ORATOR.

My friends, we have too many orators. I am tired and sick of your "silver-tongued orators." I used to mourn because I couldn't be an orator. I thought, Oh, if I could only have the gift of speech like some men! I have heard men with a smooth flow of language take the audience captive, but they came and

they went, their voice was like the air, there wasn't any *power* back of it; they trusted in their eloquence and their fine speeches. That is what Paul was thinking of when he wrote to the Corinthians:—"My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

Take a witness in court and let him try his oratorical powers in the witness-box, and see how quickly the judge will rule him out. It is the man who tells the plain, simple truth that has the most influence with the jury.

Suppose that Moses had prepared a speech for Pharaoh, and had got his hair all smoothly brushed, and had stood before the looking-glass or had gone to an elocutionist to be taught how to make an oratorical speech and how to make gestures. Suppose that he had buttoned his coat, put one hand in his chest, had struck an attitude and begun:

"The God of our fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, has commanded me to come into the presence of the noble King of Egypt."

I think they would have taken his head right off! They had Egyptians who could be as eloquent as Moses. It was not eloquence they wanted. When you see a man in the pulpit trying to show off his eloquence he is making a fool of himself and trying to make a fool of the people. Moses was slow of speech, but he had a message, and what God wanted was to have him deliver the message. But he insisted upon having an excuse. He didn't want to go; instead of being eager to act as heaven's messenger, to be God's errand boy,

he wanted to excuse himself. The Lord humored him and gave him an interpreter, gave him Aaron.

Now, if there is a stupid thing in the world, it is to talk through an interpreter. I tried it once in Paris. I got up into a little box of a pulpit with the interpreter —there was hardly room enough for one. I said a sentence while he leaned away over to one side, and then I leaned over while he repeated it in French. Can you conceive of a more stupid thing than Moses going before Pharaoh and speaking through Aaron!

But this slow-of-speech man became eloquent. Talk about Gladstone's power to speak! Here is a man one hundred and twenty years old, and he waxed eloquent, as we see in Deuteronomy xxxii: 1-4:

> Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak;
> And hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.
> My doctrine shall drop as the rain,
> My speech shall distil as the dew,
> As the small rain upon the tender herb,
> And as the showers upon the grass:
> Because I will publish the name of the Lord:
> Ascribe ye greatness unto our God.
> He is the Rock, His work is perfect:
> For all His ways are judgment:
> A God of truth and without iniquity,
> Just and right is He.

He turned out to be one of the most eloquent men the world has ever seen. If God sends men and they deliver His message He will be with their mouth. If God has given you a message, go and give it to the people as God has given it to you. It is a stupid thing for a man to try to be eloquent. Make

YOUR MESSAGE, AND NOT YOURSELF,

the most prominent thing. Don't be self-conscious

Set your heart on what God has given you to do, and don't be so foolish as to let your own difficulties or your own abilities stand in the way. It is said that people would go to hear Cicero and would come away and say, "Did you ever hear anything like it? wasn't it sublime? wasn't it grand?" But they would go and hear Demosthenes, and he would fire them so with the subject that they would want to go and fight at once. They forgot all about Demosthenes, but were stirred by his message; that was the difference between the two men.

Next Moses said: "O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send."

Did you ever stop to think what Moses would have lost if God had taken him at his word, and said:

"Very well, Moses; you may stay here in the desert, and I will send Aaron, or Joshua, or Caleb!"

Don't seek to be excused if God calls you to some service. What would the twelve disciples have lost if they had declined the call of Jesus! I have always pitied those other disciples of whom we read that they went back, and walked no more with Jesus. Think what Orpah missed and what Ruth gained by cleaving to Naomi's God! Her story has been

TOLD THESE THREE THOUSAND YEARS.

Father, mother, sisters, brothers, the grave of her husband—she turned her back on them all. Ruth, come back, and tell us if you regret your choice! No: her name shines one of the brightest among all the women that have ever lived. The Messiah was one of her descendants.

Moses, you come back and tell us if you were after-

wards sorry that God had called you? I think that when he stood in glorified body on the Mount of Transfiguration with Jesus and Elijah, he did not regret it.

My dear friends, God is not confined to any one messenger. We are told that He can raise up children out of stones. Some one has said that there are three classes of people, the "wills," the "won'ts," and the "can'ts"; the first accomplish everything, the second oppose everything, and the third fail in everything. If God calls you, consider it a great honor. Consider it a great privilege to have partnership with Him in anything. Do it cheerfully, gladly. Do it with all your heart, and He will bless you. Don't let false modesty or insincerity, self-interest, or any personal consideration turn you aside from the path of duty and sacrifice. If we listen for God's voice, we shall hear the call; and if He calls and sends us, there will be no such thing as failure, but success all along the line. Moses had glorious success because he went forward and did what God called him to do.

NAAMAN THE SYRIAN

I wish to call your attention to one who was a great man in his own country, and very honorable; one whom the king delighted to honor. He stood high in position; he was captain of the host of the King of Syria; but he was a leper, and that threw a blight over his whole life. As Bishop Hall quaintly puts it, "The meanest slave in Syria would not have changed skins with him."

Now you cannot have a better type of a sinner than Naaman was. I don't care who or what he is, or what position he holds—all men alike have sinned, and all have to bear the same burden of death. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." All men must stand in judgment before God. What a gloom that throws over our whole life!

"*But he was a leper.*" There was

NO PHYSICIAN

who could help him in Syria. None of the eminent doctors in Damascus could do him any good. If he was to get rid of the leprosy, the power must come from on high. It must be some one unknown to Naaman, for he did not know God.

But I will tell you what they had in Syria—they had one of God's children there, and she was a little girl, a simple captive maid, who waited on Mrs. Naaman. Naaman knew nothing about this little Israelite, though she was one of his household.

I can imagine that one day, as she was waiting on the general's wife, she noticed her weeping. Her heart was breaking because of the dark cloud that rested over her home. So she told her mistress that there was a prophet in her country that could cure her master of his leprosy. "Would to God," she said, "my lord were with the prophet in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy."

There's faith for you!

She boasted of God that He would do more for this heathen than He had done for any in Israel; and

GOD HONORED HER FAITH.

"What do you say? A prophet in Israel that can cure leprosy?"

"Yes."

"Why, did you ever know any one that was cured?"

"No."

"Well, then, what makes you think there is a prophet that can cure leprosy?"

"Oh, that isn't anything to what Elisha can do. There was a little child that lived near us that died, and he raised him to life. He has done many wonderful things."

She must have had a reputation for truthfulness. If she hadn't, her testimony would not have been taken.

Some one told the general of it, and he made it known to the king. Now, Naaman stood high in the king's favor, for he had recently won a great victory. He stood near the throne. So the king said:

"You had better go down to Samaria, and see if there is anything in it. I will give you letters of introduction to the King of Israel."

Yes, he would give Naaman letters of introduction to the king. That's just man's idea. The notion was, that if anybody could help him it was the king, and that the king had power both with God and man. Oh, my friends, it is a good deal better to know a man that knows God! A man acquainted with God has more power than any earthly potentate. Gold can't do everything.

Away goes Naaman down to Samaria with his kingly introduction. What a stir it must have made when the commander of the Syrian army drove up! He has brought with him a lot of gold and silver. That is man's idea again; he is going to pay for a great doctor, and he took about five hundred thousand dollars to pay for the doctor's bill. There are a good many men who would willingly pay that sum if with it they could buy the favor of God, and get rid of the curse of sin. Yes, if money could do it,

HOW MANY WOULD BUY SALVATION!

But, thank God, it is not in the market for sale. You must buy it at God's price, and that is "without money and without price." Naaman found that out.

My dear friends, did you ever ask yourselves which is the worse—the leprosy of sin, or the leprosy of the body? For my own part, I would a thousand times sooner have the leprosy of the body eating into my eyes, and feet, and arms! I would rather be loathsome in the sight of my fellow-men than die with the leprosy of sin in my soul, and be banished from God forever! The leprosy of the body is bad, but the leprosy of sin is a thousand times worse. It has cast angels out of heaven. It has ruined the best and

strongest men that ever lived in the world. Oh, how it has pulled men down! The leprosy of the body could not do that.

There is one thing about Naaman that I like specially, and that is his earnestness of purpose. He was

THOROUGHLY IN EARNEST.

He was quite willing to go one hundred and fifty miles, and to take the advice of this little maid. A good many people say:

"Oh, I don't like such and such a minister; I should like to know where he comes from, and what he has done, and whether any bishop has laid his hands on his head."

My dear friends, never mind the minister; it is the message you want. If some one were to send me a telegraph message, and the news were important, I shouldn't stop to ask about the messenger who brought it. I should want to read the news. I should look at the message, and not at the boy who brought it.

And so it is with God's message. The good news is everything, the minister nothing. The Syrians looked down with contempt on the Israelites, and yet this great man was willing to take the good news at the hands of this little maiden, and listened to the words that fell from her lips. If I got lost in New York, I should be willing to ask anybody which way to go, even if it were only a shoeblack; and, in point of fact, a boy's word in such a case is often better than a man's. It is the way I want, not the person who directs me.

But there was one drawback in Naaman's case. Though he was willing to take the advice of the little

girl, he was not willing to take the remedy. The stumbling-block of pride stood in his way. The remedy the prophet offered him was a terrible blow to his pride. I have no doubt he expected a grand reception from the King of Israel, to whom he brought letters of introduction. He had been victorious on many a field of battle, and held high rank in the army; perhaps we may call him Major-General Naaman of Syria, or he might have been higher in rank even than that; and bearing with him kingly credentials, he expected no doubt a distinguished reception. But instead of the king rushing out to meet him, he, when he heard of Naaman's arrival and his object, simply rent his mantle, and said:

"Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? Wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me."

Elisha heard of the king's trouble, and sent him a message, saying:

"Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? Let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel."

I can imagine Naaman's pride reasoning thus: "Surely, the prophet will feel very much exalted and flattered that I, the great Syrian general, should come and call upon him."

And so, probably, full of those proud thoughts, he drives up to the prophet's humble dwelling with his chariot and his splendid retinue. Yes, Naaman drove up in grand style to the prophet's abode, and as nobody seemed to be coming out to greet him, he sent in his message:

"Tell the prophet that Major-General Naaman of Syria has arrived, and wishes to see him."

Elisha takes it very coolly. He does not come out to see him, but as soon as he learns his errand he sends his servant to tell him to dip seven times in the river Jordan, and he shall be clean.

That was a terrible blow to his pride. I can imagine him saying to his servant:

"What did you say? Did I understand you aright? Dip seven times in the Jordan! Why, we call the river Jordan a *ditch* in our country."

But the only answer he got was, "The prophet says, Go and dip seven times in the Jordan, and thy flesh shall become like the flesh of a little child."

I can fancy Naaman's indignation as he asks, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean? Haven't I bathed myself hundreds of times, and has it helped me? Can water wash away leprosy?"

So he turned and went away in a rage.

It isn't a bad sign when a man gets mad if you tell him the truth. Some people are afraid of getting other people mad. I have known wives afraid to talk to their husbands, afraid of getting them mad. I have known mothers who were afraid to talk to their sons because they were

AFRAID THEY WOULD GET MAD.

Don't be afraid of getting them mad, if it is the truth that makes them mad. If it is our foolishness that makes them mad, then we have got reason to mourn over it. If it is the truth, God sent it, and it is a good

deal better to have a man get mad than it is to have him go to sleep. I think the trouble with a great many nowadays is that they are sound asleep, and it is a good deal better to rouse them even if they do wake up mad.

The fact was, the Jordan never had any great reputation as a river. It flowed into the Dead Sea, and that sea never had a harbor to it, and its banks were not half so beautiful as those of the rivers of Damascus. Damascus was one of the most beautiful cities in the world. It is said that when Mahomet beheld it he turned his head aside for fear it should divert his thoughts from heaven.

Naaman turned away in a rage. "Ah," he said, "here am I, a great conqueror, a successful general on the battlefield, holding the very highest rank in the army, and yet this prophet does not even come out to meet me; he simply sends a message. Why, I thought he would surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place and recover the leper."

There it is. I hardly ever knew a man yet who, when talked to about his sins, didn't say:

"Yes, but I *thought* so and so."

"Mr. Moody," they say, "I will tell you what *I think;* I will tell you *my opinion.*"

In the 55th chapter of Isaiah it says that God's thoughts are not our thoughts, nor His ways our ways. And so it was with Naaman. In the first place, he thought a good big doctor's fee would do it all, and settle everything up. And besides that there was another thing he thought; he thought going to the king with his letters of introduction would do it. Yes, those were

Naaman's first thoughts. *I thought.* Exactly so. He turned away in rage and disappointment. He thought the prophet would have come out to him very humble and very subservient, and

BID HIM DO SOME GREAT THINGS.

Instead of that, Elisha, who was perhaps busy writing, did not even come to the door or the window. He merely sent out the message:

"Tell him to dip seven times in the Jordan."

And away went Naaman, saying, *I thought, I thought, I thought.*

I have heard that tale so often that I am tired of it. Give it up, and take God's words, God's thoughts, God's ways. I never yet knew a man converted just in the time and manner he expected to be. I have heard people say, "Well, if ever I am converted, it won't be in a Methodist church; you won't catch me there." I never knew a man say that but, at last, if converted at all, it was in a Methodist church.

In Scotland a man was converted at one of our meetings—an employer. He was very anxious that all his employees should be reached, and he used to send them one by one to the meetings. But there was one man that wouldn't come. We are all more or less troubled with stubbornness; and the moment this man found that his employer wanted him to go to the meetings he made up his mind he wouldn't go. If he was going to be converted, he said, he was going to be converted by some ordained minister; he was not going to any meeting that was conducted by Americans that were not ordained. He believed in conversion, but he was going to be

CONVERTED THE REGULAR WAY.

He believed in the regular Presbyterian Church of Scotland, and that was the place for him to be converted.

The employer tried every way he could to get him to attend the meetings, but he wouldn't come.

After we left that town and went away up to Inverness, the employer had some business up there, and he sent this employee to attend to it in the hope that he would attend some of our meetings.

One night as I was preaching on the banks of a river I happened to take this for my text: "I thought; I thought." I was trying to take men's thoughts up and to show the difference between their thoughts and God's thoughts. This man happened to be walking along the banks of the river. He saw a great crowd, and heard some one talking, and he wondered to himself what that man was talking about. He didn't know who was there, so he drew up to the crowd, and listened. He heard the sermon, and became convicted and converted right there. Then he inquired who was the preacher, and he found out it was the very man that he said he would not hear—the man he disliked. The very man he had been talking against was the very man God used to convert him.

Whilst Naaman was thus wavering in his mind, and thinking on what was best to be done, one of his servants drew near and made a very sensible remark:

"My lord, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? How much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?"

There is a great deal of truth in that.

If Elisha had told him to go back to Syria on his

hands and knees, one hundred and fifty miles, he would have done it and thought it was all right. If he had told him to go into some cave and stay there a year or two, he would have done it and thought it was all right. If he had told him that it was necessary to have some surgical operation performed, and that he had to go through all the torture incident to it, that would have suited him. Men like to have something to do about their salvation; they don't like to give up the idea that they can't do anything; that God must do it all. If you tell them to take bitter herbs every morning and every night for the next five years, they think that's all right, and if he had told Naaman to do that he would have done it. But to tell him merely to dip in the river Jordan seven times, why, it seemed absurd on the face of it! But this servant suggested to him that he had better go down to the Jordan and try the remedy, as it was

A VERY SIMPLE ONE.

Now, don't you see yourselves there? How many men there are who are waiting for some great thing; waiting for some sudden feeling to come stealing over them; waiting for some shock to come upon them. That is not what the Lord wants. There is a man that I have talked to about his soul for a number of years, and the last time I had a talk with him, he said:

"Well, the thing hasn't struck me yet."

I said: "What?"

"Well," says he, "the thing hasn't struck me yet."

"Struck you; what do you mean?"

"Well," said he, "I go to church, and I hear you preach, and I hear other men preach, but the thing

hasn't struck me yet; it strikes some people, but it hasn't struck me yet."

That was all that I could get out of him. There are a good many men who reason in that way. They have heard some young converts tell how light dawned upon them like the flash of a meteor; how they experienced a new sensation; and so they are waiting for something of the kind. But you can't find any place in Scripture where you are told to wait for anything of the kind. You are just to obey what God tells you to do, and let your feelings take care of themselves. I can't control my feelings. I can't make myself feel good and bad when I want to, but I can obey God. God gives me the power. He doesn't command me to do something and not give me the power to do it. With the command comes the power.

Now, Naaman could do what the prophet told him; he could go down to the Jordan, and he could dip seven times; and that is what the Lord had for him to do; and if we are going to get into the kingdom of God, right at the threshold of that kingdom we have to learn this doctrine of obedience, to do whatsoever He tells us.

I can fancy Naaman still reluctant to believe in it, saying, "Why, if there is such cleansing power in the waters of Jordan, would not every leper in Israel go down and dip in them, and be healed?"

"Well, but you know," urges the servant, "now that you have come a hundred and fifty miles, don't you think you had better do what he tells you? After all, you can but try it. He sends word distinctly, my lord, that your flesh shall come again as that of a little child."

Naaman accepts this word in season. His anger is cooling down. He has got over the first flush of his indignation. He says:

"Well, I think I might as well try it."

That was

THE STARTING-POINT OF HIS FAITH,

although still he thought it a foolish thing, and could not bring himself to believe that the result would be what the prophet had said.

At last Naaman's will was conquered, and he surrendered. When General Grant was besieging a town which was a stronghold of the Southern Confederacy, some of the officers sent word that they would leave the city if he would let them go with their men. But General Grant sent word:

"No, nothing but an unconditional surrender!"

Then they sent word that they would go if he would let them take their flag with them. But the answer was:

"No, an unconditional surrender."

At last the beleagured walls were broken down, and the city entered, and then the enemy made a complete and unconditional surrender. Well, it was so with Naaman; he got to that point when he was willing to obey, and the Scripture tell us, "To obey is better than to sacrifice."

God wants obedience. Naaman had to learn this lesson. There was no virtue, probably, in going down to the Jordan, any more than in obeying the voice of God. He had to obey the word, and

IN THE VERY ACT OF OBEDIENCE

he was blessed.

Look at those ten New Testament lepers who came

to Christ. He said to them: "Go show yourselves to the priests."

"Well," they might have said, "what good is that going to do us? Here we are all full of leprosy, and if we go and show ourselves to the priests they will order us back again into exile. That is not going to help us."

But those ten men started off, and did just what the Lord Jesus Christ told them to do, and in the very act of doing it they were blessed; their leprosy left them.

He said to that man that had the palsy, whom they brought to Him upon a bed: "Take up thy bed and walk."

The man might have said: "Lord, I have been trying for years to take that bed up, but I can't. I haven't got the power. I have been shaking with the palsy for the last ten years. Do you think that if I could have rolled up that bed that I would have been brought here and let down through the roof? I haven't the power."

But when the Lord commanded him He gave the power. Power came with the command, and that man stood up, rolled up his bed, and started off home. He was blessed in the very act of obedience.

My friends, if you want God to bless you, obey Him. Do whatsoever He calls upon you to do, and then see if He will not bless you.

Christ went to a Pharisee's house one day while He was down here upon earth, to be entertained. They wanted to get Him to do something to break the law of Moses, that they might condemn Him to death, and so they put a man right opposite to Him at the table with a withered hand, to see if He would heal upon the Sabbath day. He said to the man:

"Stretch out thy hand."

Now, the man might have said, "Lord, that is a very strange command. I haven't got the power. That hand has been withered for the last twenty years. I haven't stretched it out for the last twenty years; and you say, 'Stretch it out.'"

But when He told him to do it He gave him the power, and out went that old withered hand, and before it came out straight, right in the very act, it was made whole. He was blessed in the very act of obedience.

Now, Naaman had to be taught the lesson that he had to obey; and so, finally, he went down to the Jordan just as he was told to do. And if you will do just what the Lord tells you the Lord will bless you as He did Naaman.

You may ask, "What does He tell me?"

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

The word of God to Naaman was to go and wash; and the word of God to every soul out of Christ is to believe on His Son. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My word and believeth on Him that sent Me *hath* everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." If a man believes with all his heart on the Lord Jesus Christ, God will never bring him to judgment for sin; that is all passed—that is all gone. Take Him at His word; believe Him; believe what He says, and you shall enter into life eternal. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." HIM—mark you—not a dogma, not a creed,

NOT A MYTH, BUT A PERSON.

"He came to His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power

to become the sons and daughters of God." That is the way you get the power.

Naaman goes down to the river and takes the first dip. As he comes up I can imagine him looking at himself, and saying to his servant:

"There! there I am, no better than I was when I went in! If one-seventh of the leprosy was gone, I should be content."

The servant says: "The man of God told you to dip seven times. Do just as he told you. There is no discount on God's word."

Well, down he goes a second time, and he comes up puffing and blowing, as much a leper as ever; and so he goes down again and again, the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth time, with the same result, as much a leper as ever. Some of the people standing on the banks of the river probably said, as they certainly would in our day:

"Why, that man has gone clean out of his mind!"

When he comes up the sixth time, he looks at himself, and says:

"Ah, no better! What a fool I have made of myself! How they will all laugh at me! I wouldn't have the generals and aristocracy of Damascus know that I have been dipping in this way in Jordan for all the world. However, as I have gone so far, I'll make the seventh plunge."

He has not altogether lost faith, and down he goes the seventh time, and comes up again. He looks at himself, and shouts aloud for joy.

"Lo, I am well! My leprosy is all gone, all gone! My flesh has come again as that of a little child."

If one speck of leprosy had remained, it would have been a reflection on God.

Ask him now how he feels.

"Feel? I feel that this is the happiest day of my life. I thought when I won a great victory upon the battle-field that that was the most joyful day of my life; I thought I should never be so happy again; but that wasn't anything; it didn't compare with this hour; my leprosy is all gone, I am whole, I am cleansed."

First he lost his temper; then he lost his pride; then his leprosy. That is generally the order in which proud, rebellious sinners are converted.

So he comes up out of Jordan and puts on his clothes, and goes back to the prophet. He was very mad with Elisha in the beginning, but when he was cleansed his anger was all gone too. He wants to pay him. That's just the old story; Naaman

WANTS TO GIVE MONEY

for his cure. How many people want to do the same nowadays. Why it would have spoiled the story of grace if the prophet had taken anything! You may give a thank-offering to God's cause, not to purchase salvation, but because you are saved. The Lord doesn't charge anything to save you. It is "without money and without price." The prophet Elisha refused to take anything, and I can imagine no one felt more rejoiced than he did.

Naaman starts back to Damascus a very different man than he was when he left it. The dark cloud has gone from his mind; he is no longer a leper, in fear of dying from a loathsome disease. He lost the leprosy in Jordan when he did what the man of God told him; and if you obey the voice of God, even while I am speaking to you, the burden of your sins will fall from

off you, and you shall be cleansed. It is all done through faith and obedience.

Let us see what Naaman's faith led him to believe. "And he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came, and stood before him: and he said, Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel: now therefore, I pray thee, take a blessing of thy servant."

What I want particularly to call your attention to is the words

I KNOW.

There is no hesitation about it, no qualifying the expression. Naaman doesn't now say, "I think"; no, he says, "*I know* there is a God who has power to cleanse the leprosy."

Then there is another thought. Naaman left only one thing in Samaria, and that was his leprosy; and the only thing God wishes you to leave with Him is your sin. And yet it is the only thing you seem not to care about giving up.

"Oh," you say, "I love leprosy, it is so delightful, I can't give it up; I know God wants it, that He may make me clean. But I can't give it up."

Why, what downright madness it is for you to love leprosy; and yet that is your condition.

"Ah," says someone, "I don't believe in sudden conversions."

Don't you? How long did it take Naaman to be cured? The seventh time he went down, away went the leprosy. Read the great conversions recorded in the Bible. Saul of Tarsus, Zacchæus, and a host of others; how long did it take the Lord to bring them about? They were effected in a minute. We are born

in iniquity, shapen in it, dead in trespasses and sins; but when spiritual life comes it comes in a moment, and we are free both from sin and death.

You may be sure when he got home there was no small stir in Naaman's house. I can see his wife, Mrs. Naaman, when he gets back. She has been watching and looking out of the window for him with a great burden on her heart. And when she asks him, "Well, husband, how is it?" I can see the tears running down his cheeks as he says:

"Thank God, I am well."

They embrace each other, and pour out mutual expressions of rejoicing and gladness. The servants are just as glad as their master and mistress, as they have been waiting eagerly for the news. There never was a happier household than Naaman's, now that he has got rid of the leprosy. And so, my friends, it will be with your own households if you will only get rid of the leprosy of sin to-day. Not only will there be joy in your own hearts and at home, but there will also be

JOY AMONG THE SAINTS IN HEAVEN.

Once, as I was walking down the street, I heard some people laughing and talking aloud. One of them said:

"Well, there will be no difference, it will be all the same a hundred years hence."

The thought flashed across my mind, "Will there be no difference? Where will you be a hundred years hence?"

Young man, just ask yourself the question, "Where shall I be?" Some of you who are getting on in years may be in eternity ten years hence. Where will you

be, on the left or the right hand of God? I cannot tell your feelings, but I can my own. I ask you, "Where will you spend eternity? Where will you be a hundred years hence?"

I heard once of a man who went to England from the Continent, and brought letters with him to eminent physicians from the Emperor. The letters said:

"This man is a personal friend of mine, and we are afraid he is going to lose his reason. Do all you can for him."

The doctor asked him if he had lost any dear friend in his own country, or any position of importance, or what it was that was weighing on his mind.

The young man said, "No; but my father and grandfather and myself were brought up infidels, and for the last two or three years this thought has been haunting me, Where shall I spend eternity? And the thought of it follows me day and night."

The doctor said, "You have come to

THE WRONG PHYSICIAN,

but I will tell you of one who can cure you"; and he told him of Christ, and read to him the 53d chapter of Isaiah, "With His stripes we are healed."

The young man said, "Doctor, do you believe that?"

The doctor told him he did, and prayed and wrestled with him, and at last the clear light of Calvary shone on his soul. He had settled the question in his own mind at last, where he would spend eternity. I ask you, sinner, to settle it now. It is for you to decide. Shall it be with the saints, and martyrs, and prophets, or in the dark caverns of hell, amidst blackness and

darkness forever? Make haste to be wise; for "how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

At our church in Chicago I was closing the meeting one day, when a young soldier got up and entreated the people to decide for Christ at once. He said he had just come from a dark scene. A comrade of his, who had enlisted with him, had a father who was always entreating him to become a Christian, and in reply he always said he would when the war was over. At last he was wounded, and was put into the hospital, but got worse and was gradually sinking. One day, a few hours before he died, a letter came from his sister, but he was too far gone to read it. Oh, it was such an earnest letter! The comrade read it to him, but he did not seem to understand it, he was so weak, till it came to the last sentence, which said:

"Oh, my dear brother, when you get this letter, will you not accept your sister's Savior?"

The dying man sprang up from his cot, and said, "What do you say? what do you say?" and then, falling back on his pillow, feebly exclaimed, "*It is too late! It is too late!*"

My dear friends, thank God it is not *too late* for you to-day. The Master is still calling you. Let every one of us, young and old, rich and poor, come to Christ at once, and He will put all our sins away. Don't wait any longer for feeling, but obey at once. You can believe, you can trust, you can lay hold on eternal life, if you will. Will you not do it now?

THE PROPHET NEHEMIAH

I should like to call your attention to the prophet Nehemiah. We may gain some help from that distinguished man who accomplished a great work. He was one of the last of the prophets, was supposed to be contemporary with Malachi, and perhaps his book was one of the last of the Old Testament books that was written. He might have known Daniel, for he was a young man in the declining years of that very eminent and godly statesman. We are sure of one thing at least—he was a man of sterling worth. Although he was brought up in the Persian court among idolaters, yet he had a character that has stood all these centuries.

Notice his prayer in which he made confession of Israel's apostasy from God. There may be some confessions we need to make to be brought into close fellowship with God. I have no doubt that numbers of Christians are hungering and thirsting for a personal blessing, and have a great desire to get closer to God. If that is the desire of *your* heart, keep in mind that if there is some obstacle in the way which you can remove, you will not get a blessing until you remove it. We must coöperate with God. If there is any sin in my heart that I am not willing to give up then I need not pray. You may take a bottle and cork it up tight, and put it under Niagara, and not a drop of that mighty volume of water will get into the bottle. If there is any sin in my heart that I am not willing to

give up, I need not expect a blessing. The men who have had power with God in prayer have always begun by confessing their sins. Take the prayers of Jeremiah and Daniel. You find Daniel confessing his sin, when there isn't a single sin recorded against him; but he confesses his sin and the sins of the people. Notice how David confessed his sins and what power he had with God. So it is a good thing for us to begin as Nehemiah did.

It seems that some men had come down from his country to the Persian court, perhaps to see the king on business. This man, who was in high favor with the king, met them, and finding that they had come from Jerusalem he began to inquire about his country. He not only loved his God, but he

LOVED HIS COUNTRY.

I like to see a patriotic man. He began to inquire about his people and about the city that was very near to his heart, Jerusalem. He had never seen the city. He had no relations back there in Jerusalem that he knew of. Nehemiah was not a Jewish prince, although it is supposed he had royal blood in his veins. He was born in captivity. It was about one hundred years after Jerusalem was taken that he appeared upon the horizon. He was in the court of Artaxerxes, a cup-bearer to the king, and held a high position. Yet he longed to hear from his native land. When these men told him the condition of the city, that the people were in great want and distress and degradation, and that the walls of the city were still down, that the gates had been burned and never restored, his patriotic heart began to burn. We are told he fasted and prayed and

wept, and not only did he pray for one week, or one month, but he kept on praying. He prayed "day and night." Having many duties to perform, of course he was not always on his knees, but in heart he was ever before the throne of grace. It was not hard for him to understand and obey the precept, "Pray without ceasing." He began the work in prayer, continued in prayer, and the last recorded words of Nehemiah are a prayer.

It was in November or December when those men arrived at that court, and this man prayed on until March or April before he spoke to the king. If a blessing doesn't come to-night, pray harder to-morrow, and if it doesn't come to-morrow, pray harder, and then, if it doesn't come keep right on, and you will not be disappointed. God in heaven will hear your prayers, and will answer them. He has *never failed*, if a man has been honest in his petitions and honest in his confessions. Let your faith beget patience. God is never in a hurry, said St. Augustine, because He has all eternity to work.

In the first chapter of Nehemiah is

THE PRAYER

of this wonderful man, his cry which has been on record all these years, and a great help to many people:

"I beseech thee, O Lord God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments: let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the

children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned. We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses. Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations: but if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there. Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand. O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man."

When he began to pray I have no idea that he thought he was to be the instrument in God's hand of building the walls of Jerusalem. But when a man gets into sympathy and harmony with God, then God prepares him for the work He has for him. No doubt he thought the Persian king might send one of his great warriors and accomplish the work with a great army of men, but after he had been praying for months, it may be the thought flashed into his mind:

"Why should not I go to Jerusalem myself and build those walls?"

Prayer for the work will soon arouse your own sympathy and effort.

Now mark, it meant a good deal for Nehemiah to give up the palace of Shushan and his high office, and identify himself with the despised and captive Jews. He was among the highest in the whole realm. Not only that, but he was a man of wealth, lived in ease and luxury, and had great influence at court. For him to go to Jerusalem and lose caste was like Moses turning his back on the palace of Pharaoh and identifying himself with the Hebrew slaves. Yet we might

NEVER HAVE HEARD OF

either of them if they had not done this. They stooped to conquer; and when you get ready to stoop God will bless you. Plato, Socrates, and other Greek philosophers lived in the same century as Nehemiah. How few have heard of them and read their words compared with the hundreds of thousands who have heard and read of Nehemiah during the last two thousand years!

If you and I are to be blessed in this world, we must be willing to take any position into which God puts us. So, after Nehemiah had prayed a while, he began to pray God to send him, and that he might be the man to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

After he had been praying some time, he was one day in the banqueting hall, and the king noticed that his countenance was sad. We might not have called the face sad; but much prayer and fasting

CHANGE THE VERY COUNTENANCE

of a man. I know some godly men and women, and they seem to have the stamp of heaven on them. The king noticed a strange look about this cupbearer, and

he began to question him. Then the thought came to Nehemiah that he would tell the king what caused his sorrow,—how his own nation was degraded, and how his heart was going out for his own country. After he had told the king, the king said:

"What is your request?"

Now, some men tell us they don't have time to pray, but I tell you if any man has God's work lying deep in his heart he *will* have time to pray. Nehemiah

SHOT UP A PRAYER

to heaven right there in the king's dining hall that the Lord would help him to make his request in the right way. He first looked beyond Artaxerxes to the King of Kings. You need not make a long prayer. A man who prays much in private will make short prayers in public. The Lord told Nehemiah what to ask for, that he might be sent to his own country, that some men might go with him, and that the king would give him letters to the governors through whose provinces he would pass so that he might have a profitable journey and be able to rebuild the walls of his city. God had been preparing the king, for the king at once granted the request, and before long this young prince was on his way to Jerusalem.

When he reached the city he didn't have a lot of men go before him blowing trumpets and saying that the cupbearer of the great Persian king,

THE CONVERTED CUPBEARER,

had arrived from the Persian court, and was going to build the walls of Jerusalem. There are some men who are always telling what they are going to do.

Man, let the work speak for itself. You needn't blow any horns; go and do the work, and it will advertise itself. Nehemiah didn't have any newspapers writing about him, or any placards. However, there was no small stir. No doubt every one in town was talking about it, saying that a very important personage had arrived from the Persian court; but he was there three days and three nights without telling anyone why he had come.

One night he went out to survey the city. He couldn't ride around; even now you cannot ride a beast around the walls of Jerusalem. He tried to ride around, but he couldn't, so he walked. It was a difficult task which he had before him, but he was not discouraged. That is what makes character. Men who can go into a hard field and succeed, they are the men we want. Any quantity of men are looking for easy places, but the world will never hear of them. We want men who are looking for hard places, who are willing to go into the darkest corners of the earth, and make those dark places bloom like gardens. They can do it if the Lord is with them.

Everything looked dark before Nehemiah. The walls were broken down. There was not a man of influence among the people, not a man of culture or a man of wealth. The nations all around were looking down upon these weak, feeble Jews. So it is in many churches to-day, the walls are down, and people say it is no use, and their hands drop down by their side. Everything seemed against Nehemiah, but he was a man who had the *fire of God* in his soul; he had come to build the walls of Jerusalem. If you could have bored a hole into his head, you would have found

"Jerusalem" stamped on his brain. If you could have looked into his heart you would have found "Jerusalem" there. He was a fanatic; he was terribly in earnest; he was an enthusiast. I like to see a man take up some one thing and say, "I will do it; I live for this thing; this one thing I am bound to do." We spread out so much, and try to do so many things, that

WE SPREAD SO THIN

the world never hears of us.

After he had been in the city three days and nights, he called the elders of Israel together, and told them for what he had come. God had been preparing them, for the moment he told them they said:

"Let us rise up and build."

But there has not been a work undertaken for God since Adam fell which has not met with opposition. If Satan allows us to work unhindered, it is because our work is of no consequence. The first thing we read, after the decision had been made to rebuild the walls, is:

"When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king?"

These men were very indignant. They didn't care for the welfare of Jerusalem. Who were they? A mixed multitude who had no portion nor right nor memorial in Jerusalem. They didn't like to see the restoration of the ruins, just as people nowadays do not like to see the cause of Christ prospering. The offence of the cross has not ceased.

It doesn't take long to build the walls of a city if you can only get the whole of the people at it. If the Christians of this country would only rise up, we could evangelize America in twelve months. All the Jews had a hand in repairing the walls of Jerusalem. Each built over against his own house, priest and merchant, goldsmith and apothecary, and even the women. The men of Jericho and other cities came to help. The walls began to rise.

This stirred up Nehemiah's enemies, and they began to ridicule.

RIDICULE

is a mighty weapon.

"What do these feeble Jews?" said Sanballat. "Will they fortify themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they make an end in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?"

"Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall," said Tobiah the Ammonite.

But Nehemiah was wise. He paid no attention to them. He just looked to God for grace and comfort:

"Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of captivity: and cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before: for they have provoked thee to anger before the builders."

Young man, if you wish to be successful in this world, don't mind Sanballat or Tobiah. Don't be kept out of the kingdom of God or out of active Christian work by the scorn and laughter and ridicule of your godless neighbors and companions.

Next, these enemies conspired to come and fight against Jerusalem.

Nehemiah was warned, and took steps to guard against them. Half of the people were on the watch, and the other half held a sword in one hand and a trowel in the other. There was

NO EIGHT-HOUR WORKING DAY

then; they were on duty from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared. They did not take off their clothes except to wash them. Fancy this man who came from the Persian court with all its luxury, living and sleeping in his clothes for those fifty-two days! But he was in earnest. Ah, that is what we want! men who will set themselves to do one thing, and keep at it day and night.

All the people were bidden to lodge within the city, so that they should always be on hand to work and fight. Would to God that we could get all who belong inside the church to come in and do their share. "Happy is the church," says one, "whose workers are well skilled in the use of the Scripture, so that while strenuously building the Gospel Wall, they can fight too, if occasion require it." We ought all be ready to use the Sword of the Spirit.

By and by the men wrote a friendly letter, and wanted Nehemiah to go down on the plain of Ono and have a friendly discussion. It is

A MASTERPIECE OF THE DEVIL

to get men into friendly discussions. I don't know whether Nehemiah had a typewriter in those days or not; I don't know whether he had a printed form of letters, but he always sent back the same reply:

"I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down."

How many a church has turned aside for years to discuss "questions of the day," and has neglected the salvation of the world because they must go down to the "plain of Ono" and have a friendly discussion! Nehemiah struck a good keynote—"I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down." If God has sent you to build the walls of Jerusalem, *you go and do it.*

They sent him another letter, and again he sent word back, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down." He did not believe in "coming down." They sent him another, and he sent back the same word. They sent him a fourth letter, with the same result. They could not get him down; they wanted to slay him on the way.

I have seen many Christian men on the plain of Ono, men who were doing a splendid work but had been switched off. Think how much work has been neglected by temperance advocates in this country because they have gone into politics and into discussing woman's rights and woman's suffrage. How many times the Young Men's Christian Association has been switched off by discussing some other subject instead of holding up Christ before a lost world! If the church would only keep right on and build the walls of Jerusalem they would soon be built. Oh, it is a wily devil that we have to contend with! Do you know it? If he can only get the church to stop to discuss these questions, he has accomplished his desire.

His enemies wrote him one more letter,

AN OPEN LETTER,

in which they said that they had heard he was going to set up a kingdom in opposition to the Persians, and

that they were going to report him to the king. Treason has an ugly sound, but Nehemiah committed himself to the Lord, and went on building.

Then his enemies hired a prophet, one of his friends. A hundred enemies outside are not half so hard to deal with as one inside—a false friend. When the devil gets possession of a child of God he will do the work better than the devil himself. Temptations are never so dangerous as when they come to us in a religious garb. So Tobiah and Sanballat bought up one of the prophets, and hired him to try to induce Nehemiah to go into the temple, that they might put him to death there.

"Now, Nehemiah, there is a plan to kill you, come into the temple. Let's go in and stay for the night."

He came near being deceived, but he said, "Shall I, such a man as I, be afraid of my life, and do that to save my life?"

After he had refused their invitation he saw that this man was a false prophet; and so by his standing his ground he succeeded in fifty-two days in building the walls of Jerusalem. Then the gates were set up and the work was finished.

Now during all these centuries that story has been told. If Nehemiah had remained at court, he might have died a millionaire, but he never would have been heard of twenty years after his death. Do you know the names of any of Nineveh's millionaires? This man stepped out of that high position and took a low position, one that the world looked down upon and frowned upon, and his name has been associated with the walls of Jerusalem all these centuries. Young man, if you want to be immortal, become identified

with God's work, and pay no attention to what men outside say. Nehemiah and his associates began at sunrise and worked until it grew so dark they could not see. A man who will take up God's work, and work summer and winter right through the year, will have a harvest before the year is over, and the record of it will shine after he enters the other world.

The next thing we learn of Nehemiah is that he got up a great

OPEN-AIR MEETING

for the reading of the law of Moses in the hearing of the people. A pulpit of wood, large enough to hold Ezra the Scribe and thirteen others, was built. The people wept when they heard the words of the law, but Nehemiah said:

"Mourn not, nor weep. Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

He did not forget the poor. Reading the Bible and remembering the poor—a combination of faith and works—will always bring joy.

Nehemiah then began to govern the city, and correct the abuses he found existing. He gathered about fifty priests and scribes together and made them sign and seal a written covenant. There were five things in that covenant I want to call attention to.

First, *they were not to give their daughters to the heathen.*

They had been violating the law of God, and had been marrying their daughters to the ungodly. God had forbidden them to intermarry with the heathen

nations in the land of Canaan; "for they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you and *destroy thee suddenly.*" I have known many a man who has lost his power by being identified with the ungodly. If you want to have the blessing of God rest upon you, you must be very careful about your alliances. The Jews always got into trouble when they married with the nations round about. The houses of Ahab and of Solomon lost their kingdom by that sin. That was the cause of the overthrow of David's kingdom. Families who marry for wealth, and marry the godly to the ungodly, always bring distress into the family.

Then he made them sign a covenant that they would *keep the Sabbath*, that they would not buy upon the Sabbath.

Think of a man going from a heathen court where they had no Sabbath, a man brought up in that atmosphere, coming up to Jerusalem and enforcing the law of Moses! It is recorded that they brought up fish, and he would not let them into the city on the Sabbath, and the fish spoiled. After they had tried that a few times, they gave it up. If you will take your stand for God, even if you stand alone, it will not be very long before you will get other men to stand with you. God stood with this man, and he carried everything before him.

I don't believe we shall have the right atmosphere in this country until we can get men who have backbone enough to stand up against the thing they believe is wrong. If it is a custom rooted and grounded for a hundred years, never mind; you take your stand

against it if you believe it is wrong. If you have gatherings, and it is fashionable to have wine and champagne, and you are a teetotaler; if they ask you anywhere and you know that they are to have drink, tell them you are not going. A man said to me some years ago:

"Mr. Moody, now that I am converted, must I give up the world?"

I said: "No, you haven't got to give up the world. If you give a good ringing testimony for the Son of God, the world will give you up pretty quick; they won't want you around."

They were going to have a great celebration at the opening of a saloon and billiard hall in Chicago, in the northern part of the city, where I lived. It was to be a gateway to death and to hell, one of the worst places in Chicago. As a joke they sent me an invitation to go to the opening. I took the invitation and went down and saw the two men who had the saloon, and I said:

"Is that a genuine invitation?"

They said it was.

"Thank you," I said, "I will be around; if there is anything here I don't like I may have something to say about it."

They said: "You are not going to *preach?*"

"I may."

"We don't want you. We won't let you in."

"How are you going to keep me out?" I asked; "there is the invitation."

"We will put a policeman at the door."

"What is the policeman going to do with that invitation?"

"We won't let you in."

"Well," I said, "I will be there."

I gave them a good scare, and then I said, "I will compromise the matter; if you two men will get down here and let me pray with you, I will let you off."

I got those two rumsellers down on their knees, one on one side of me, and the other on the other side, and I prayed God to save their souls and smite their business. One of them had a Christian mother, and he seemed to have some conscience left. After I had prayed, I said:

"How can you do this business? How can you throw this place open to ruin young men of Chicago?"

Within three months the whole thing smashed up, and one of them was converted some time after. I have never been invited to a saloon since.

You won't have to give up the world, not by a good deal. If you go to reunions, and there is drinking, get up and go away. Don't you be party to it. That is the kind of men we want. When you find anything that is ruining your fellow men, fight it to its bitter end.

Nehemiah said, "We will not have desecration of the Sabbath." Not sell the Sunday paper? Not buy a Sunday paper? How many read the Sunday newspapers?

I suppose that if you had Nehemiah as mayor of New York, he would stop that sort of thing. Here we have boys who are kept away from the Sunday school to sell papers on the streets—trains running in order that the papers can be distributed. I don't believe a man is in a fit state to hear a sermon whose mind is full of such trash as the Sunday newspaper is filled with. Men break the Sabbath and wonder why it is they

have not spiritual power. The trouble nowadays is that it doesn't mean anything to some people to be a Christian. What we must have is a higher type of Christianity in this country. We must have a Christianity that has in it the principle of self-denial. We must deny ourselves. If we want power, we must be separate.

The next thing they were to do—(and bear in mind this was a thing they had to sign)—was to *give their land rest.*

For four hundred and ninety years they had not let their land rest, so God took them away to Babylon for seventy years, and let the land rest. A man that works seven days in the week right along is cut off about five or ten years earlier. You cannot rob God. Why is it that so many railroad superintendents and physicians die early? It is because they work seven days in the week. So Nehemiah made them covenant to keep the law of Moses. If the nations of the earth had kept that law, the truth would have gone to the four corners of the earth before this time.

Then he made them sign a covenant that *they would not charge usury.*

They were just grinding the poor down. I believe that the reason we are in such a wretched state in this country to-day is on account of crowding the poor, and getting such a large amount of money for usury. People evade the law, and pay the interest, and then they give a few hundred dollars to negotiate the loan. There is a great amount of usury, and see where we are to-day! See what a wretched state of things we are having, not only in this country, but all over the world!

The fifth thing he made them do was to *bring their first fruits to the sons of Levi.*

They were to give God a tenth, the first and best. As long as Israel did that they prospered, and when they turned away from that law they did not prosper. You can look through history and look around you and see the same thing to-day. As long as men keep God's law and respect God's testimony, they are going to prosper, but when they turn aside, like Samson, they lose their strength; they have no power.

If you take these five things and carry them out, you will have prosperity. Let us all do it personally. If it was good for those men it is good for us. The moment we begin to rob God of time or talents then darkness and misery and wretchedness will come.

HEROD AND JOHN THE BAPTIST

If some one had told me a few years ago that he thought Herod at one time came near the kingdom of God, I should have been inclined to doubt it. I would have said, "I do not believe that the bloodthirsty wretch who took the life of John the Baptist ever had a serious thought in his life about his soul's welfare." I held that opinion because there is one scene recorded in Herod's life that I had overlooked. But some years ago, when I was going through the gospel of Mark, making a careful study of the book, I found this verse:

"Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly." (Mark vi, 20).

This caused me to change my views about Herod. I saw that he was not only brought within the sound of John's voice, but under the power of the Spirit of God; his heart was touched and his conscience awakened. We are not told under what circumstances he heard John; but the narrative plainly states that he was brought under the influence of the Baptist's wonderful ministry.

Let me first say a word or two about

THE PREACHER.

I contend that John the Baptist must have been one of the grandest preachers this world has ever had. Almost any man can get a hearing nowadays in a town

or a city, where the people live close together; especially if he speaks in a fine building where there is a splendid choir, and if the meetings have been advertised and worked up for weeks or months beforehand. In such circumstances any man who has a gift for speaking will get a good audience. But it was very different with John. He drew the people out of the towns and cities away into the wilderness. There were no ministers to back him; no business men interested in Christ's cause to work with him; no newspaper reporters to take his sermons down and send them out. He was an unknown man, without any title to his name. He was not the Right-Rev. John the Baptist, D. D., or anything of the kind, but plain John the Baptist. When the people went to inquire of him if he were Elias or Jeremiah come back to life, he said he was not.

"Who are you then?"

"I am the Voice of one crying in the wilderness."

He was nothing but a voice—to be heard and not seen; he was Mr. Nobody. He regarded himself as a messenger who had received his commission from the eternal world.

How he began his ministry, and how he gathered the crowds together we are not informed. I can imagine that one day this strange man makes his appearance in the valley of the Jordan, where he finds a few shepherds tending their flocks. They bring together their scattered sheep, and the man begins to preach to these shepherds. The kingdom of heaven, he says, is about to be set up on the earth; and he urges them to set their houses in order—to repent and turn away from their sins. Having delivered his message, he tells

them that he will come back the next day and speak again.

When he had disappeared in the desert, I can suppose one of the shepherds saying to another:

"Was he not a strange man? Did you ever hear a man speak like that? He did not talk as the rabbis or the Pharisees or the Sadducees do. I really think he must be one of the old prophets. Did you notice that his coat was made of camel's hair, and that he had a leathern girdle round his loins? Don't the Scriptures say that Elijah was clothed like that?"

Says another: "You remember how Malachi says that before the great and dreadful day of the Lord, Elijah should come? I really believe this man is the old prophet of Carmel."

What could stir the heart of the Jewish people more than the name of Elijah?

The tidings of John's appearance spread up and down the valley of the Jordan, and when he returned the next day, there was great excitement and expectation as the people listened to the strange preacher. Perhaps till Christ came he had only that

ONE TEXT:

"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Day after day you could hear his voice ringing through the valley of the Jordan:

"Repent! repent! repent! The King is at the door. I do not know the day or the hour, but He will be here very soon."

By and by some of the people who flocked to hear him wanted to be baptized, and he took them to the Jordan and baptized them.

The news spread to the surrounding villages and

towns, and it was not long before it reached Jerusalem. Then the people of the city began to flock into the desert to hear this prince among preachers. His fame soon reached Galilee, and the people in the mountains began to flock down to hear him. Men left their fishing-smacks on the lake, that they might listen to this wonderful preacher. When he was in the zenith of his popularity, as many as twenty or thirty thousand people perhaps flocked to his ministry day after day.

No doubt there were some old croakers who said it was

ALL SENSATION.

"Catch me there! No, sir; I never did like sensational preaching."

Just as some people speak nowadays when any special effort is made to reach the people!

"Great harm will be done," they say.

I wish all these croakers had died out with that generation in Judea; but we have plenty of their descendants still. I venture to say you have met with them. Why, my dear friends, there is more excitement in your whisky shops and beer saloons in one night than in all the churches put together in twelve months. What a stir there must have been in Palestine under the preaching of John the Baptist, and of Christ! The whole country reeled and rocked with intense excitement. Don't be afraid of a little excitement in religious matters; it won't hurt.

One might hear those old Pharisees and Scribes grumbling about John being such a sensational preacher. "It won't last." And when Herod had John the Baptist beheaded, they would say, "Didn't I tell you so?"

Do not let us be in a hurry in passing judgment. John the Baptist lives to-day more than ever he did; his voice goes ringing through the world yet. He only preached a few months, but for more than eighteen hundred years his sermons have been repeated and multiplied, and the power of his words will never die as long as the world lasts.

I can imagine that just when John was at the height of his popularity, as Herod sat in his palace in Jerusalem looking out towards the valley of the Jordan, he could see great crowds of people passing day by day. He began to make inquiries as to what it meant, and the news came to him about this strange and powerful preacher. Some one, perhaps, reported that John was preaching treason. He was telling of a king who was at hand, and who was going to set up his kingdom.

"A king at hand! If Cæsar were coming, I should have heard of it. There is no king but Cæsar. I must look into the matter. I will go down to the Jordan, and hear this man for myself."

So one day, as John stood preaching, with the eyes of the whole audience upon him, the people being swayed by his eloquence like tree-tops when the wind passes over them, all at once he lost their attention. All eyes were suddenly turned in the direction of the city. One cries:

"Look, look! Herod is coming!"

Soon the whole congregation knows it, and there is great excitement.

"I believe he will stop this preaching," says one.

And if they had in those days some of the compromising weak-kneed Christians we sometimes meet, they would have said to John:

"Don't talk about a coming King; Herod won't stand it. Talk about repentance, but any talk about a coming King will be high treason in the ears of Herod."

I think if any one had dared to give John such counsel, he would have replied: "I have received my message from heaven; what do I care for Herod or any one else?"

As he stood thundering away and calling on the people to repent, I can see Herod, with his guard of soldiers around him, listening attentively to find anything in the preacher's words that he can lay hold of. At last John says:

"The King is just at the door. He will set up His kingdom, and will separate the wheat from the chaff."

I can imagine Herod then saying to himself: "I will have that man's head off inside of twenty-four hours. I would arrest him here and now if I dared. I will catch him to-morrow before the crowd gathers."

By and by, as Herod listens, some of the people begin to press close up to the preacher, and to question him. Some soldiers are among them, and they ask John:

"What shall we do?"

John answers: "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages."

"That is pretty good advice," Herod thinks; "I have had a good deal of trouble with these men, but if they follow the preacher's advice, it will make them better soldiers."

Then he hears the publicans ask John, as they come to be baptized:

"What shall we do?"

The answer is: "Exact no more than that which is appointed you."

"Well," says Herod, "that is excellent advice. These publicans are all the time overtaxing the people. If they would do as the preacher tells them, the people would be more contented."

Then the preacher addresses himself to the Pharisees and the Sadducees in the crowd, and cries:

"O generation of vipers! Who hath warned *you* to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth fruits worthy of repentance."

Says Herod within himself: "I like that. I am glad he is giving it pretty strong to these men. I do not think I will have him arrested just yet."

So he goes back to his palace. I can imagine he was

NOT ABLE TO SLEEP MUCH

that night; he kept thinking of what he had heard. When the Holy Ghost is dealing with a man's conscience, very often sleep departs from him. Herod cannot get this wilderness preacher and his message out of his mind. The truth had reached his soul; it echoed and re-echoed within him: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." He says:

"I went out to-day to hear for the Roman Government; I think I will go to-morrow and hear for myself."

So he goes back again and again. My text says that he heard him gladly, that he observed him, and feared him, knowing that he was a just man and a holy. He must have known down in his heart that John was

A HEAVEN-SENT MESSENGER.

Had you gone into the palace in those days, you would have heard Herod talking of nobody but John the Baptist. He would say to his associates:

"Have you been out into the desert to hear this strange preacher?"

"No; have you?"

"Yes."

"What! you, the Roman Governor, going to hear this unordained preacher?"

"Yes, I have been quite often. I would rather hear him than any man I ever knew. He does not talk like the regular preachers. I never heard any one who had such influence over me."

You would have thought that Herod was a very hopeful subject. "He did many things." Perhaps he stopped swearing. He may have stopped gambling and getting drunk. A wonderful change seemed to have passed over him. Perhaps he ceased from taking bribes for a time; we catch him at it afterwards, but just then he refrained from it. He became quite virtuous in certain directions. It really looked as if he were near the kingdom of heaven.

I can imagine that one day, as John stands preaching, the truth is going home to the hearts and consciences of the people, and the powers of another world are falling upon them, one of John's disciples stands near Herod's chariot, and sees the tears in the eyes of the Roman Governor. At the close of the service he goes to John and says:

"I stood close to Herod to-day, and no one seemed more impressed. I could see the tears coming, and he had to brush them away to keep them from falling."

Have you ever seen a man in a religious meeting trying to keep the tears back? You noticed that his forehead seemed to itch, and he put up his hand; you may know what it means—he wants to conceal the fact

that the tears are there. He thinks it is a weakness. It is no weakness to get drunk and abuse your family, but it is weakness to shed tears. So this disciple of John may have noticed that Herod put his hand to his brow a number of times; he did not wish his soldiers, or those standing near, to observe that he was weeping. The disciple says to John:

"It looks as if he were coming near the kingdom. I believe you will have him as an inquirer very soon."

When a man enjoys hearing such a preacher, it certainly seems a hopeful sign.

Herod might have been present that day when Christ was baptized. Was there ever a man lifted so near to heaven as Herod must have been if he were present on that occasion? I see John standing surrounded by a great throng of people who are hanging on his words. The eyes of the preacher, that never had quailed before, suddenly began to look strange. He turned pale and seemed to draw back as though something wonderful had happened, and right in the middle of a sentence he ceased to speak. If I were suddenly to grow pale, and stop speaking, you would ask:

"Has death crept onto the platform? Is the tongue of the speaker palsied?"

There must have been quite a commotion among the audience when John stopped. The eyes of the Baptist were fixed upon a Stranger who pushed His way through the crowd, and coming up to the preacher, requested to be baptized. That was a common occurrence; it had happened day after day for weeks past. John listened to the Stranger's words, but instead of going at once to the Jordan and baptizing Him, he said:

"I need to be baptized of Thee!"

What a thrill of excitement must have shot through the audience! I can hear one whispering to another:

"I believe that is the Messiah!"

Yes, it was the long-looked-for One, for whose appearing the nation had been waiting these thousands of years. From the time God had made the promise to Adam, away back in Eden, every true Israelite had been looking for the Messiah; and there He was in their midst!

He insisted that John should baptize Him, and the forerunner recognized His authority as Master, took Him to the Jordan, and baptized Him. As He came up from the water, lo! the heavens opened, and the Spirit of God in the form of a dove descended and rested on Him. When Noah sent forth the dove from the Ark, it could find no resting-place; but now the Son of God had come to do the will of God, and the dove found its resting-place upon Him. The Holy Ghost had found a home. Now God broke the silence of four thousand years. There came a voice from heaven, and Herod may have heard it if he was there that day:

"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Even if he had not witnessed this scene and heard the voice, he must have heard about it; for the thing was not done in a corner. There were thousands to witness it, and the news must have been taken to every corner of the land.

Yet Herod, living in such times, and hearing such a preacher, missed the kingdom of heaven at last. He did many things because he feared John. Had he

feared God he would have done everything. "He did many things"; but there was one thing he would not do—

HE WOULD NOT GIVE UP ONE DARLING SIN.

The longer I preach, the more I am convinced that that is what keeps men out of the kingdom of God. John knew about Herod's private life, and warned him plainly.

If those compromising Christians of whom I have spoken had been near John, one of them would have said:

"Look here, John, it is reported that Herod is very anxious about his soul, and is asking what he must do to be saved. Let me give you some advice; don't touch on Herod's secret sin. He is living with his brother's wife, but don't you say anything about it, for he won't stand it. He has the whole Roman Government behind him, and if you allude to that matter it will be more than your life is worth. You have a good chance with Herod; he is afraid of you. Only be careful, and don't go too far, or he will have your head off."

There are those who are willing enough that you should preach about the sins of other people, so long as you do not come home to them. My wife was once teaching my little boy a Sabbath-school lesson; she was telling him to notice how sin grows till it becomes habit. The little fellow thought it was coming too close to him, so he colored up, and finally said:

"Mamma, I think you are getting a good way from the subject."

John was a preacher of this uncompromising kind,

for he drove the message right home. I do not know when or how the two were brought together at that time, but John kept nothing back; he boldly said:

"Herod, it is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife."

The man was breaking the law of God, and living in the cursed sin of adultery. Thank God, John did not spare him! It cost the preacher his head, but the Lord had got his heart, and he did not care what became of his head. We read that Herod feared John, but John did not fear Herod.

I want to say that I do not know of a quicker way to hell than by the way of adultery. Let no one flatter himself that he is going into the kingdom of God who does not repent of this sin in sackcloth and ashes. My friend, do you think God will never bring you into judgment? Does not the Bible say that no adulterer shall inherit the kingdom of God?

Do you think John the Baptist would have been a true friend of Herod if he had spared him, and had covered up his sin? Was it not a true sign that John loved him when he warned him, and told him he must quit his sin? Herod had before done many things, and heard John gladly; but he did not like him then. It is one thing to hear a man preach down other people's sins. Men will say, "That is splendid," and will want all their friends to go and hear the preacher. But let him touch on their individual sin as John did, and declare (as Nathan did to David), "Thou art the man," and they say, "I do not like that." The preacher has touched a sore place.

When a man has broken his arm, the surgeon must

find out the exact spot where the fracture is. He feels along and presses gently with his fingers.

"Is it there?"

"No."

"Is it there?"

"No."

Presently, when the surgeon touches another spot, "Ouch!" says the man.

He has found the broken part, and it hurts. John placed his finger on the diseased spot, and Herod winced under it. He put his hand right on it:

"Herod, it is not lawful for thee to have thy brother Philip's wife!"

Herod did not want to give up his sin.

Many a man would be willing to enter into the kingdom of God, if he could do it without giving up sin. People sometimes wonder why Jesus Christ, who lived six hundred years before Mohammed, has got fewer disciples than Mohammed to-day. There is no difficulty in explaining that. A man may become a disciple of Mohammed, and continue to live in the foulest, blackest, deepest sin; but a man cannot be a disciple of Christ without giving up sin. If you are trying to make yourself believe that you can get into the kingdom of God without renouncing your sin, may God tear the mask from you! Can Satan persuade you that Herod will be found in the kingdom of God along with John the Baptist, with the sin of adultery and of murder on his soul?

And now, let me say this to you. If your minister comes to you frankly, tells you of your sin, and warns you faithfully, thank God for him. He is your best friend; he is a heaven-sent man. But if a minister

speaks smooth, oily words to you; tells you it is all right, when you know, and he knows, that it is all wrong, and that you are living in sin, you may be sure that he is a devil-sent man. I want to say I have a contempt for a preacher that will tone his message down to suit some one in his audience; some Senator, or big man whom he sees present. If the devil can get possession of such a minister and speak through him, he will do the work better than the devil himself. You might be horrified if you knew it was Satan deceiving you, but if a professed minister of Jesus Christ preaches this doctrine and says that God will make it all right in the end, that though you go on living in sin, it is just the same. Don't be deluded into believing such doctrine—it is as false as any lie that ever came from the pit of hell. All the priests and ministers of all the churches cannot save one soul that will not part with sin.

There is an old saying that, "Every man has his price." Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage; pretty cheap, was it not? Ahab sold out for a garden of herbs. Judas sold out for thirty pieces of silver—less than $17 of our money. Pretty cheap, was it not? Herod sold out for adultery.

WHAT IS THE PRICE

that you put upon your soul? You say you do not know. I will tell you. *It is the sin that keeps you from God.* It may be whisky; there is many a man who will give up the hope of heaven and sell his soul for whisky. It may be adultery; you say:

"Give me the harlot, and I will relinquish heaven with all its glories. I would rather be damned with my sin than saved without it."

What are you selling out for, my friend? You know what it is.

Do you not think it would have been a thousand times better for Herod to-day if he had taken the advice of John the Baptist instead of that vile, adulterous woman? There was Herodias pulling one way, John the other, and Herod was in the balance. It's the same old battle between right and wrong; heaven pulling one way, hell the other. Are you going to make the same mistake yourself? We have ten thousand-fold more light than Herod had. He lived on the other side of the cross. The glorious gospel had not shone out as it has done since. Think of the sermons you have heard, of the entreaties addressed to you to become a Christian. Some of you have had godly mothers who have prayed for you. Many of you have godly wives who have pleaded with you, and with God, on your behalf. You have been surrounded with holy influences from year to year, and how often you have been near the kingdom of God! Yet here you are to-day, further off than ever!

It may be true of you, as it was of Herod, that you hear your preacher gladly. You attend church, you contribute liberally, you do many things. Remember that none of these avail to cleanse your soul from sin. They will not be accepted in the place of what God demands—repentance and the forsaking of every sin.

A child was once playing with a vase, and put his hand in and could not draw it out again. His father tried to help him, but in vain. At last he said:

"Now, make one more try. Open your fingers out straight, and let me pull your arm."

"Oh, no, papa," said the son, 'I'd drop the penny if I opened my fingers like that!"

Of course he couldn't get his hand out when his fist was doubled. He didn't want to give up the penny. Just so with the sinner. He won't cut loose from his sins.

Your path and mine will perhaps never cross again. But if I have any influence with you, I beseech and beg of you to break with sin now, let it cost you what it will. Herod might have been associated with Joseph of Arimathea, and with the twelve apostles of the Lamb, if he had taken the advice of John. There might have been a fragrance around his name all these centuries. But alas! when we speak of Herod, we see a sneer on the faces of those who hear us. If one had said to Herod in those days, "Do you know that you are going to silence that great preacher, and have him beheaded?" he would have replied, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do such a thing? I never would take the life of such a man." He would probably have thought he could never do it. Yet it was only a little while after that he had the servant of God beheaded.

Do you know that the Gospel of Jesus Christ proves either a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death? You sometimes hear people say: "We will go and hear this man preach. If it does us no good, it will do us no harm." Don't you believe it, my friend! Every time you hear the Gospel and reject it, the hardening process goes on. The same sun that melts the ice hardens the clay. The sermon that would have moved you a few years ago would make no impression now. Do you not recall some night when you heard some sermon that shook the foundations of your skepticism and unbelief? But you are indifferent now.

I believe Herod was seven times more a child of hell after his conviction had passed away than he was before. There is not a true minister of the Gospel who will not say that the hardest people to reach are those who have been impressed, and whose impressions have worn away. It is a good deal easier to commit a sin the second time than it was to commit it the first time, but it is a good deal harder to repent the second time than the first.

If you are near the kingdom of God now, take the advice of a friend and step into it. Don't be satisfied with just getting near to it. Christ said to the young ruler, "Thou art not far from the kingdom," but he failed to get there. Don't run any risks. Death may overtake you before you have time to carry out your best intentions, if you put off a decision.

It is sad to think that men heard Jesus and Paul, and were moved under their preaching, but were not saved. Judas must many times have come near the kingdom, but he never entered in. I saw it in the army—men who had

ALMOST DECIDED

to become Christians cut down in battle without having taken the step that would have made them sure of eternal life. I confess there is something very sad about it.

In one of the tenement houses in New York city, a doctor was sent for. He came, and found a young man very sick. When he got to the bedside the young man said:

"Doctor, I don't want you to deceive me; I want to know the worst. Is this illness to prove serious?"

After the doctor had made an examination, he said: "I am sorry to tell you you cannot live out the night."

The young man looked up and said: "Well, then, I have missed it at last!"

"Missed what?"

"I have missed eternal life. I always intended to become a Christian some day, but I thought I had plenty of time, and put it off."

The doctor, who was himself a Christian man, said: "It is not too late. Call on God for mercy."

"No; I have always had a great contempt for a man who repents when he is dying; he is a miserable coward. If I were not sick I would not have a thought about my soul, and I am not going to insult God now."

The doctor spent the day with him, read to him out of the Bible, and tried to get him to lay hold of the promises. The young man said he would not call on God, and in that state of mind he passed away. Just as he was dying the doctor saw his lips moving. He reached down, and all he could hear was the faint whisper:

"*I have missed it at last!*"

Dear friend, make sure that you do not miss eternal life at last. Will you go with Herod or with John? Bow your head now and say:

"Son of God, come into this heart of mine. I yield myself to Thee, fully, wholly, unreservedly."

He will come to you, and will not only save you, but will keep you to the end.

THE MAN BORN BLIND AND JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA

There were two extraordinary men living in the city of Jerusalem when Christ was on earth. One of them has come down through history nameless—we do not know who he was; the name of the other is given. One was not only a beggar, but blind from his birth; the other was one of the rich men of Jerusalem. Yet in the Gospel of John, there is more space given to this blind beggar than to any other character. The reason why so much has been recorded of this man is because he took his stand for Jesus Christ.

Look at the account given in John ix., beginning at the fifth verse. In the previous chapter Christ had been telling them that He was the Light of the world, and that if any man would follow Him he should not walk in darkness, but should have the light of life. After making a statement of that kind, Christ often gave

AN EVIDENCE OF THE TRUTH

of what He said by performing some miracle. If He had said He was the Light of the world, He would show them in what way He was the Light of the world. If He had said He was the Life of the world, He would prove Himself to be such by quickening and raising the dead; just as He did, after telling them that He was the Resurrection and the Life, by going to the graveyard of Bethany and calling Lazarus forth.

When Lazarus heard the voice of his friend saying, "Lazarus, come forth!" he came forth immediately.

The Son of God does not ask men to believe Him without a reason for so doing. We need to keep this in mind. You might as well ask a man to see without light or eyes, as to believe without testimony.

He gave them good reason for believing in Him, and proved His Messiahship and authority. He not only told them that He had the power, but He showed them that He had.

These two men, then, were both at Jerusalem. One held as high a position, and the other as low a position, as any in the city. One was at the top of the social ladder, and the other at the bottom. And yet they both made a good confession; and one was as acceptable to Jesus as the other.

I

The man mentioned in this chapter was born blind. We find the Lord's disciples asking Him:

"Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

Jesus answered, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be manifest in him."

When He had thus spoken, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle; and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him:

"Go wash in the pool of Siloam."

The blind man went his way and washed, and his eyesight was restored.

Observe what that man did. He did *just what Christ told him to do.* The Savior's command to him was to

go to the pool of Siloam and wash; and "he went his way therefore, and came seeing." He was blessed in the very act of obedience.

Another thought: God does not generally repeat Himself. Of all the blind men who were healed while Christ was on earth, no two were healed in exactly the same way. Jesus met blind Bartimeus near the gates of Jericho, and called him to Him and said:

"What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?"

The answer was: "Lord, that I might receive my sight."

Now, see what He did. He did not send Bartimeus off to Jerusalem twenty miles away to the pool of Siloam to wash. He did not spit on the ground, and make clay, and anoint his eyes; but with a word He wrought the cure, saying:

"Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole."

Suppose Bartimeus had gone from Jericho and had met the other blind beggar at the gate of the city of Jerusalem, and asked him how it was he got his sight; suppose they began to compare notes—one telling his experience, and the other telling his. Imagine the first saying:

"I do not believe that you have got your sight, because you did not get it in the same way that I got mine."

Would the different ways the Lord Jesus had in healing them make their cases the less true? Yet there are some people who talk just that way now. Because God does not deal with some exactly as He does with others, people think that God is not dealing with them at all. God seldom repeats Himself. No two persons were ever converted exactly alike, so far

as my experience goes. Each one must have an experience of his own. Let the Lord give sight in His own way.

There are thousands of people who

KEEP AWAY FROM CHRIST

because they are looking for the experience of some dear friend or relative. They should not judge of their conversion by the experiences of others. They have heard some one tell how he was converted twenty years ago, and they expect to be converted in the same way. Persons should never count upon having an experience precisely similar to that of some one else of whom they have heard or read. They must go right to the Lord Himself, and do what He tells them to do. If He says, "Go to the pool of Siloam and wash," then they must go. If He says, "Come just as you are," and promises to give sight, then they must come, and let Him do His own work in His own way, just as this blind man did. It was a peculiar way by which to give a man sight; but it was the Lord's way; and the man's sight was given him. We might think it was enough to make a man blind to fill his eyes with clay. True, he was now doubly blind; for if he had been able to see before, the clay would have deprived him of his sight. But the Lord wanted to show the people that they were not only spiritually blind by nature, but that they had also allowed themselves to be blinded by the clay of this world, which had been spread over their eyes. But God's ways are not our ways. If He is going to work, we must let Him act as He pleases.

Shall we dictate to the Almighty? Shall the clay say

to the potter, "Why hast thou made me thus?" Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God? Let God work in His own way; and when the Holy Ghost comes, let Him mark out a way for Himself. We must be willing to submit, and to do what the Lord tells us, without any questioning whatever.

"He went his way, therefore, and washed, and came seeing. The neighbors, therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, 'Is not this he that sat and begged?'

"Some said, 'This is he'; others said, 'He is like him.' "

Now, if he had been like a good many at the present time, I am afraid he would have remained silent. He would have said:

"Well, now I have got my sight, and I will just keep quiet about it. It is not necessary for me to confess it. Why should I say anything? There is a good deal of opposition to this man Jesus Christ. There are a great many bitter things said in Jerusalem against Him. He has a great many enemies. I think there will be trouble if I talk about Him; so I will say nothing."

Some said, "This is he"; others said, "He is like him." But he said, "I am he." He not only got his eyes opened, but, thank God, he got his mouth open too!

Surely, the next thing after we get our eyes opened is for us to open our lips and begin to testify for Him.

The people asked him, "How were thine eyes opened?"

He answered: "A man that is called Jesus made clay and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to

the pool of Siloam and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight."

He told a straightforward story, just what the Lord had done for him. That is all. That is what a witness ought to do—tell what he knows, not what he does not know. He did not try to make a long speech. It is not the most flippant and fluent witness who has the most influence with a jury.

This man's testimony is what I call "experience." One of the greatest hindrances to the progress of the Gospel to-day is that the narration of the experience of the Church is not encouraged. There are a great many men and women who come into the Church, and we never hear anything of their experiences, or of the Lord's dealings with them. If we could, it would be a great help to others. It would stimulate faith and encourage the more feeble of the flock.

THE APOSTLE PAUL'S EXPERIENCE

has been recorded three times. I have no doubt that he told it everywhere he went: how God had met him; how God had opened his eyes and his heart; and how God had blessed him. Depend upon it, experience has its place; the great mistake that is made now is in the other extreme. In some places and at some periods there has been too much of it—it has been all experience; and now we have let the pendulum swing too far the other way.

I think it is not only right, but exceedingly useful, that we should give our experience. This man bore testimony to what the Lord had done for him.

"And it was the Sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes. Then again the Pharisees

also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, 'He put clay upon mine eyes; and I washed, and do see.' Therefore said some of the Pharisees, 'This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath day.' Others said, 'How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?' And there was a division among them.

"They say unto the blind man again, 'What sayest thou of Him, that He hath opened thine eyes?' "

What an opportunity he had for evading the questions! He might have said: "Why, I have never seen Him. When He met me I was blind; I could not see Him. When I came back I could not find Him; and I have not formed any opinion yet." He might have put them off in that way, but he said:

"He is a prophet."

He gave them his opinion. He was a man of backbone. He had moral courage. He stood right up among the enemies of Jesus Christ, the Pharisees, and told them what he thought of Him—

"He is a prophet."

If you can get young Christians to talk, not about themselves, but about Christ, their testimony will have power. Many converts talk altogether about their own experience—"I," "I," "I," "I." But this blind man got away to the Master, and said, "He is a prophet." He believed, and he told them what he believed.

"But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight. And they asked them, saying, 'Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? How then doth he now see?'

His parents answered them, and said, 'We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind: but by what means he now seeth, we know not: or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself.' These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews; for the Jews had agreed already that if any man did confess that He was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. Therefore said his parents, 'He is of age; ask him.' "

I have always had great contempt for those parents. They had a noble son, and their lack of moral courage then and there to confess what the Lord Jesus Christ had done for their son, makes them unworthy of him. They say, "We do not know how he got it," which looks as if they did not believe their own son. "He is of age; ask him."

It is sorrowfully true to-day that we have hundreds and thousands of people who are professed disciples of Jesus Christ, but when the time comes that they ought to take their stand, and give a clear testimony for Him, they testify against Him. You can always tell those who are really converted to God. The new man always takes his stand for God; and the old man takes his stand against Him. These parents had an opportunity to confess the Lord Jesus Christ, and to do great things for Him; but they neglected their golden opportunity.

If they had but stood up with their noble son, and said, "This is our son. We have tried all the physicians, and used all the means in our power, and were unable to do anything for him; but now, out of gratitude, we confess that he received his sight from the prophet of Galilee, Jesus of Nazareth," they might

have led many to believe on Him. But, instead of that, they said, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind: but by what means he now seeth, we know not."

Do you know why they did not want to tell how he got his sight? Simply because it would

COST THEM TOO MUCH.

They represent those Christians who do not want to serve Christ if it is going to cost them anything; if they have to give up society, position, or worldly pleasures. They do not want to come out. This is what keeps hundreds and thousands from becoming Christians.

It was a serious thing to be put out of the synagogue in those days. It does not amount to much now. If a man is put out of one church, another may receive him; but when he went out of the synagogue there was no other to take him in. It was the State church: it was the only one they had. If he were cast out of that, he was cast out of society, position, and everything else; and his business suffered also.

Then again the Jews called the man that was blind, "and said unto him, 'Give God the praise; we know that this man is a sinner.' "

It looks now as if they were trying to prejudice him against Christ: but he "answered and said, 'Whether He be a sinner or no, I know not; one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.' "

There were no infidels or philosophers there who could persuade him out of that. There were not men enough in Jerusalem to make him believe that his eyes were not opened. Did he not *know* that for over

twenty years he had been feeling his way around Jerusalem; that he had been led by children and friends; and that during all those years he had not seen the sun in its glory, or any of the beauties of nature? Did he not know that he had been feeling his way through life up to that very day?

And do we not know that we have been born of God, and that we have got the eyes of our souls opened? Do we not know that old things have passed away and all things have become new, and that the eternal light has dawned upon our souls? Do we not know that the chains that once bound us have snapped asunder, that the darkness is gone, and that the light has come? Have we not liberty where we once had bondage? Do we not know it? If so, then let us not hold our peace. Let us testify for the Son of God, and say, as the blind man did in Jerusalem, "ONE THING I KNOW, that whereas I was blind, now I see. I have a new power. I have a new light. I have a new love. I have a new nature. I have something that reaches out toward God. By the eye of faith I can see yonder heaven. I can see Christ standing at the right hand of God. By and by, when my journey is over, I am going to hear that voice saying, 'Come hither,' when I shall sit down in the kingdom of God."

"Then said they to him again, 'What did He do to thee? how opened He thine eyes?' But he answered them, 'I have told you already, and ye did not hear; wherefore would ye hear it again? Will ye also be His disciples?'"

This was a most extraordinary man. Here was a young convert in Jerusalem, not a day old,

TRYING TO MAKE CONVERTS

of these Pharisees—men who had been fighting Christ for nearly three years! He asked them if they would also become His disciples. He was ready to tell his experience to all who were willing to hear it. If he had covered it up at the first, and had not come out at once, he would not have had the privilege of testifying in that way, neither would he have been a winner of souls. This man was going to be a soul-winner.

I venture to say he became one of the best workers in Jerusalem. I have no doubt he stood well to the front on the day of Pentecost, when Peter preached, and when the wounded were around him; he went to work and told how the Lord had blessed him, and how He would bless them. He was a *worker*, not an *idler*, and he kept his lips open.

It is a very sad thing that so many of God's children are dumb; yet it is true. Parents would think it a great calamity to have their children born dumb; they would mourn over it, and weep; and well they might; but did you ever think of the many dumb children God has? The churches are full of them; they never speak for Christ. They can talk about politics, art, and science; they can speak well enough and fast enough about the fashions of the day; but they have

NO VOICE FOR THE SON OF GOD.

Dear friend, if He is your Savior, confess Him. Every follower of Jesus should bear testimony for Him. How many opportunities each one has in society and in business to speak a word for Jesus Christ! How many opportunities occur daily wherein every Christian might be "instant in season and out of

season" in pleading for Jesus! In so doing we receive blessing for ourselves, and also become a means of blessing to others.

This man wanted to make converts of those Pharisees, who only a little while before had their hands full of stones, ready to put the Son of God to death, and even now had murder in their hearts. They reviled him, saying, "Thou art His disciple, but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses. As for this fellow, we know not from whence He is."

Well, now the once blind man might have said, "There is a good deal of opposition, and I will say no more; I will keep quiet, and walk off and leave them." But, thank God, he stood right up with the courage of a Paul! He answered and said unto them:

"Why, herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence He is, and yet He hath opened mine eyes! Now we know that God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshiper of God, and doeth His will, him He heareth."

Now, I call that logic. If he had been through a theological seminary he could not have given a better answer. It is sound doctrine, and was a good sermon for those who were opposed to the work of Christ. "If this man were not of God He could do nothing." This is very strong proof of the man's conviction as to who the Lord Jesus was. It is as though he said: "I, a man born blind, and He can give me sight. He a *sinner!*" Why, it is unreasonable! If Jesus Christ were a man only, how could He give that man sight?

Let philosophers, skeptics, and infidels answer the question.

Neither had he to wear glasses. He received good sight, not short sight, or weak sight, but as good sight as any man in Jerusalem, and perhaps a little better. They could all look at him and see for themselves. His testimony was beyond dispute.

After his splendid confession of the divinity and power of Christ, "they answered and said unto him, 'Thou wast altogether born in sin, and dost thou teach us?' And they cast him out." They could not meet his argument, and so they cast him out. So it is now. If we give a clear testimony for Christ, the world will cast us out. It is a good thing to give our testimony so clearly for Christ that the world dislikes it; it is a good thing when such testimony for Christ causes the world to cast us out.

Let us see what happened when they cast him out. "Jesus heard," that is the next thing. No sooner did they cast him out than Jesus heard of it. No man was ever cast out by the world for the sake of Jesus Christ but He heard of it; indeed, He will be the first one to hear of it. "Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He found him He said unto him, 'Dost thou believe in the Son of God?' He answered and said, 'Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?' And Jesus said unto him, 'Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee.' And he said, 'Lord, I believe!' And he worshiped Him."

That was

A GOOD PLACE TO LEAVE HIM

—at the feet of Jesus. We shall meet him by and by in the kingdom of God.

His testimony has been ringing down through the ages these last nineteen hundred years. It has been

talked about wherever the Word of God has been known. It was a wonderful day's work that man did for the Son of God; doubtless there will be many in eternity who will thank God for his confession of Christ.

By thus showing his gratitude in coming out and confessing Christ, he has left a record that has stirred the Church of God ever since. He is one of the characters that always stirs one up, imparting new life and fire, new boldness and courage when one reads about him. This is what we need to-day as much as ever—to stand up for the Son of God. Let the Pharisees rage against us; let the world go on mocking, and sneering, and scoffing: we will stand up courageously for the Son of God. If they cast us out, they will cast us right into His own bosom. He will take us to His own loving arms. It is a blessed thing to live so godly in Christ Jesus that the world will not want you—that they will cast you out.

II

Now we come to Joseph of Arimathea.

I do not think he came out quite so nobly as this blind beggar did; but he did come out, and we will thank God for that. We read in John that for fear of the Jews he was kept back from confessing openly.

"And after this, Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, *for fear of the Jews*, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave him leave. He came, therefore, and took the body of Jesus."

Read the four accounts given in the four Gospels of Joseph of Arimathea. There is very seldom anything

mentioned by all four of the Evangelists. If Matthew and Mark refer to an event it is often omitted by Luke and John; and, if it occur in the latter, it may not be contained in the former. John's Gospel is made up of that which is absent from the others in most instances —as in the case of the blind man alluded to. But all four record what Joseph did for Christ. All His disciples had forsaken Him. One had sold Him, and another had denied Him. He was left in gloom and darkness, when Joseph of Arimathea came out and confessed Him.

It was the death of Jesus Christ that brought out Joseph of Arimathea. Probably he was one of the number that stood at the cross when the centurion smote his breast, and cried out, "Truly, this was the Son of God," and he was doubtless convinced at the same time. He was a disciple before, because we read that on the night of the trial he did not give his consent to the death of Christ. There must have been some surprise in the Council-chamber on that occasion, when Joseph of Arimathea, a rich man, stood up and said:

"I will never give my consent to His death."

There were seventy of those men, but we have very good reason to believe that there were two of them that, like Caleb and Joshua of old, had the courage to stand up for Jesus Christ—these were Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus: neither of them gave their consent to the death of Christ. But I am afraid Joseph did not come out and say that he was a disciple—for we do not find a word said about his being one until after the crucifixion.

I am afraid there are

MANY JOSEPHS TO-DAY,

men of position, of whom it could be said they are secret disciples. Such would probably say to-day, "I do not need to take my stand on Christ's side. What more do *I* need? I have everything." We read that he was a rich and honorable councillor, a just and a good man, and holding a high position in the government of the nation. He was also a benevolent man, and a devout man too. What more could he need? God wants something more than Joseph's good life and high position. A man may be all Joseph was and yet be without Christ.

But a crisis came in his history. If he was to take his stand, now was the time for him to do it. I consider that this is one of the grandest, the noblest acts that any man ever did, to take his stand for Christ when there seemed nothing, humanly speaking, that Christ could give him. Joseph had no hope concerning the resurrection. It seems that none of our Lord's disciples understood that He was going to rise again; even Peter, James, and John, as well as the rest, scarcely believed that He had risen when He appeared to them. They had anticipated that He would set up His kingdom, but He had no sceptre in His hand; and, so far as they could see, no kingdom in view. In fact, He was dead on the cross, with nails through His hands and feet. There He hung until His spirit took its flight; that which had made Him so grand, so glorious, and so noble, had now left the body.

Joseph might have said, "It will be no use my taking a stand for Him now. If I come out and confess Him I shall probably lose my position in society and in

the council, and my influence. I had better remain where I am."

There was no earthly reward for him; there was nothing, humanly speaking, that could have induced him to come out; and yet we are told by Mark that he went boldly into Pilate's judgment-hall and begged the body of Jesus. I consider this was

ONE OF THE SUBLIMEST, GRANDEST ACTS

that any man ever did. In that darkness and gloom, His disciples having all forsaken Him; Judas having sold Him for thirty pieces of silver; the chief apostle Peter having denied Him with a curse, swearing that he never knew Him; the chief priests having found Him guilty of blasphemy; the Council having condemned him to death; and when there was a hiss going up to heaven over all Jerusalem, Joseph went right against the current, right against the influence of all his friends, and begged the body of Jesus.

Blessed act! Doubtless he upbraided himself for not having been more bold in his defence of Christ when He was tried, and before He was condemned to be crucified. The Scripture says he was an honorable man, an honorable councillor, a rich man, and yet we have only the record of that one thing—the one act of begging the body of Jesus. But I tell you, that what he did for the Son of God, out of pure love for Him, will live for ever; that one act rises up above everything else that Joseph of Arimathea ever did. He might have given large sums of money to different institutions, he might have been very good to the poor, he might have been very kind to the needy in various ways; but that one act for Jesus Christ, on that

memorable, that dark afternoon, was one of the noblest acts that a man ever did. He must have been a man of great influence, or Pilate would not have given him the body.

And now you see another secret disciple, Nicodemus. Nicodemus and Joseph go to the cross. Joseph is there first, and while he is waiting for Nicodemus to come, he looks down the hill; and I can imagine his delight as he sees his friend coming with a hundred pounds of ointment. Although Jesus Christ had led such a lowly life, He was to have a kingly anointing and burial. God has touched the hearts of these two noble men, and they drew out the nails, and took the body down, washed the blood away from the wounds that had been made on His back by the scourge, and on His head by the crown of thorns; then they took the lifeless form, washed it clean, and wrapped it in fine linen, and Joseph laid Him in his own sepulchre.

When all was dark and gloomy, when His cause seemed to be lost, and the hope of the Church buried in that new tomb, Joseph took his stand for the One "despised and rejected of men." It was the greatest act of his life; and, my reader, if you want to stand with the Lord Jesus Christ in glory; if you want the power of God to be bestowed upon you for service down here, you must not hesitate to take your stand boldly and manfully for the most despised of all men —the Man Christ Jesus. His cause is unpopular. The ungodly sneer at His name. But if you want the blessings of heaven on your soul, and to hear the "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord," take your stand at once for Him, whatever your position may be, or however much your

friends may be against you. Decide for Jesus Christ, the crucified but risen Savior. Go outside the camp and bear His reproach. Take up your cross and follow Him, and by and by you will lay it down and take the crown to wear it for ever.

I remember some meetings being held in a locality where the tide did not rise very quickly, and bitter and reproachful things were being said about the work. But one day, one of the most prominent men in the place rose and said:

"I want it to be known that I am a disciple of Jesus Christ, and if there is any odium to be cast on His cause, I am prepared to take my share of it."

It went through the meeting like an electric current, and a blessing came at once to his own soul and to the souls of others.

Depend upon it, there is

NO CROWN WITHOUT A CROSS.

We must take our proper position here, as Joseph did. It cost him something to take up his cross. I have no doubt they put him out of the council and out of the synagogue. He lost his standing, and perhaps his wealth: like other faithful followers of Christ, he became, henceforth, a despised and unpopular man.

The blind man could not have done what Joseph did. Some men can do what others cannot. God will hold us responsible for our own influence. Let each of us do what we can. Even though the conduct of our Lord's professed followers was anything but helpful to those who, like Joseph, had but little courage to come out on the Lord's side, he was not deterred from taking his stand.

Whatever it costs us, let us be true Christians, and take a firm stand. It is like the dust in the balance in comparison to what God has in store for us. We can afford to suffer with Him a little while if we are going to reign with Him for ever. We can afford to take up the cross and follow Him, to be despised and rejected by the world, with such a bright prospect in view. If the glories of heaven are real, it will be to His praise and to our advantage to share in His rejection now.

May the Lord keep us from halting; and may we, when weighed in the balance, not be found wanting! May God help every reader to do all that the poor blind beggar did, and all that Joseph did!

Let us confess Him at all times and in all places. Let us show our friends that we are out and out on His side. Every one has a circle that he can influence, and God will hold us responsible for the influence we possess. Joseph of Arimathea and the blind man had circles in which their influence was powerful. I can influence people that others cannot reach; and they, in their turn, can reach a class that I could not touch. It is only for a little while that we can confess Him and work for Him. It is only for a few months or years; and then the eternal ages will roll on, and great will be our reward in the crowning day that is coming. We shall then hear the Master say to us:

"Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

God grant it may be so!

THE PENITENT THIEF

It should give us all a great deal of hope and comfort that Jesus saved such a man as the penitent thief just before He went back to heaven. Every one who is not a Christian ought to be interested in this case, to know how he was converted. Any one who does not believe in sudden conversions ought to look into it. If conversions are gradual, if it takes six months, or six weeks, or six days to convert a man, there was no chance for this thief. If a man who has lived a good, consistent life cannot be converted suddenly, how much less chance for him! Turn to the 23d chapter of Luke, and see how the Lord dealt with him. He was a thief, and the worst kind of a thief, or else they would not have punished him by crucifixion. Yet Christ not only saved him, but took him up with Himself into glory.

Let us look at Christ hanging on the cross between the two thieves. The Scribes and Pharisees wagged their heads, and jeered at Him. His disciples had fled. Only His mother and one or two other women remained in sight to cheer Him with their presence among all the crowd of enemies. Hear those spiteful Pharisees mocking among themselves: "He saved others; Himself He cannot save." The account also says that the two thieves "cast the same in his teeth."

REVILING.

The first thing we read, then, of this man is that he was a reviler of Christ.

You would think that he would be doing something else at such a time as that; but hanging there in the midst of torture, and certain to be dead in a few hours, instead of confessing his sins and preparing to meet that God whose law he had broken all his life, he is abusing God's only Son. Surely, he cannot sink any lower, until he sinks into hell!

UNDER CONVICTION.

The next time we hear of him, he appears to be under conviction:

"And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on Him, saying, If thou be Christ, save Thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man hath done nothing amiss."

What do you suppose made so great a change in this man in these few hours? Christ had not preached a sermon, had given him no exhortation. The darkness had not yet come on. The earth had not opened her mouth. The business of death was going on undisturbed. The crowd was still there, mocking and hissing and wagging the head. Yet this man, who in the morning was railing at Christ, is now confessing his sins and rebuking the other thief. "We indeed justly!" No miracle had been wrought before his eyes. No angel from heaven had come to place a glittering crown upon His head in place of the bloody crown of thorns.

What was it wrought such a change in him?

I will tell you what I think it was. I think it was the Savior's prayer;

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

I seem to hear the thief

TALKING TO HIMSELF

in this way:

"What a strange kind of man this must be! He claims to be king of the Jews, and the superscription over His cross says the same. But what sort of a throne is this! He says He is the Son of God. Why does not God send down His angels and destroy all these people who are torturing His Son to death? If He has all power now, as He used to have when He worked those miracles they talked about, why does He not bring out His vengeance, and sweep all these wretches into destruction? I would do it in a minute if I had the power. I wouldn't spare any of them. I would open the earth and swallow them up! But this man prays to God to forgive them! Strange, strange! He *must* be different from us. I am sorry I said one word against Him when they first hung us up here.

"What a difference there is between Him and me! Here we are, hanging on two crosses, side by side; but all the rest of our lives we have been far enough apart. I have been robbing and murdering, and He has been feeding the hungry, healing the sick, and raising the dead. Now these people are railing at us both! I begin to believe He must be the Son of God; for surely no man could forgive his enemies like that."

Yes, that prayer of Christ's did what the scourge could not do. This man had gone through his trial, he had been beaten, he had been nailed to the cross; but his heart had not been subdued, he had raised no cry

to God, he was not sorry for his sins. Yet, when he heard the Savior praying for His murderers, that

BROKE HIS HEART.

It flashed into this thief's soul that Jesus was the Son of God, and that moment he rebuked his companion, saying:

"Dost thou not fear God?"

The fear of God fell upon him. There is not much hope of a man's being saved until the fear of God comes upon him. Solomon says, "The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom."

We read in Acts that great fear fell upon the people; that was the fear of the Lord. That was the first sign that conviction had entered the soul of the thief. "Dost thou not fear God?" That was the first sign we have of life springing up.

CONFESSING.

Next, he confessed his sins: "We indeed justly." He took his place among sinners, not trying to justify himself.

A man may be very sorry for his sins, but if he doesn't confess them, he has no promise of being forgiven. Cain felt badly enough over his sins, but he did not confess. Saul was greatly tormented in mind, but he went to the witch of Endor instead of to the Lord. Judas felt so bad over the betrayal of his Master that he went out and hanged himself; but he did not confess to God. True, he went and confessed to the priests, saying, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood"; but it was of no use to confess to them—they could not forgive him.

How different is the case of this penitent thief! He confessed his sins, and Christ had mercy on him there and then.

The great trouble is, people are always trying to make out that they are not sinners, that they have nothing to confess. Therefore, there is no chance of reaching them with the Gospel. There is no hope for a man who folds his arms and says: "I don't think God will punish sin; I am going to take the risk." There is no hope for a man until he sees that he is under just condemnation for his sins and shortcomings. God never forgives a sinner until he confesses.

JUSTIFYING CHRIST.

The next thing, he justifies Christ: "This Man hath done nothing amiss."

When men are talking against Christ, they are a great way from becoming Christians. Now he says, "He hath done nothing amiss." There was the world mocking him; but in the midst of it all, you can hear that thief crying out:

"This Man hath done nothing amiss."

FAITH.

The next step is faith.

Talk about faith! I think this is about the most extraordinary case of faith in the Bible. Abraham was the father of the faithful; but God had him in training for twenty-five years. Moses was a man of faith; but he saw the burning bush, and had other evidences of God. Elijah had faith; but see what good reason he had for it. God took care of him, and fed him in time of famine. But here was a man who per-

haps had never seen a miracle; who had spent his life among criminals; whose friends were thieves and outlaws; who was now in his dying agonies in the presence of a crowd who were rejecting and reviling the Son of God. His disciples, who had heard His wonderful words, and witnessed His mighty works, had forsaken Him; and perhaps the thief knew this. Peter had denied Him with oaths and cursing; and perhaps this had been told the thief. Judas had betrayed Him. He saw no glittering crown upon His brow; only the crown of thorns. He could see no sign of His kingdom. Where were His subjects? And yet, nailed to the cross, racked with pain in every nerve, overwhelmed with horror, his wicked soul in a tempest of passion, this poor wretch managed to lay hold on Christ and trust Him for a swift salvation. The faith of this thief, how it flashes out amid the darkness of Calvary! It is one of the most astounding instances of faith in the Bible!

When I was a boy I was a poor speller. One day there came a word to the boy at the head of the class which he couldn't spell, and none of the class could spell it. I spelled it, by good luck; and I went from the foot of the class to the head. So the thief on the cross passed by Abraham, Moses and Elijah, and went to the head of the class. He said unto Jesus:

"Lord, remember me when thou comest into Thy kingdom."

Thank God for such a faith! How refreshing it must have been to Christ to have one own Him as Lord, and believe in His kingdom, at that dark hour! How this thief's heart goes out to the Son of God! How glad he would be to fall on his knees at the foot

of the cross, and pour out his prayer! But this he cannot do. His hands and feet are nailed fast to the wood, but they have not nailed his eyes and his tongue and his heart. He can at least turn his head and look upon the Son of God, and his breaking heart can go out in love to that One who was dying for him and dying for you and me, and he can say:

"Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom."

WHAT A CONFESSION

of Christ that was! He called Him "Lord." A queer Lord! Nails through His hands and feet, fastened to the cross. A strange throne! Blood trickling down His face from the scars made by the crown of thorns. But He was all the more "Lord" because of this.

Sinner, call Him "Lord" now. Take your place as a poor condemned rebel, and cry out:

"Lord, remember me!"

That isn't a very long prayer, but it will prevail. You don't have to add—"when Thou comest into Thy kingdom," because Christ is now at His Father's right hand. Three words; a chain of three golden links that will bind the sinner to his Lord.

Some people think they must have a form of prayer, a prayer-book, perhaps, if they are going to address the Throne of Grace properly; but what could that poor fellow do with a prayer-book up there, hanging on the cross, with both hands nailed fast? Suppose it had been necessary for some priest or minister to pray for him, what could he do? Nobody is there to pray for him, and yet he is going to die in a few hours. He is out of reach of help from man, but God has laid help upon One who is mighty, and that One is close at

hand. He prayed out of the heart. His prayer was short, but it brought the blessing. It came to the point: "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." He asked the Lord to give him, right there and then, what he wanted.

THE ANSWERED PRAYER.

Now consider the answer to his prayer. He got more than he asked, just as every one does who asks in faith. He only asked Christ to "remember" him; but Christ answered:

"To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise!"

Immediate blessing—promise of fellowship—eternal rest; this is the way Christ answered his prayer.

DARKNESS.

And now darkness falls upon the earth. The sun hides itself. Worse than all, the Father hides His face from His Son. What else is the meaning of that bitter cry:

"My God! my God! Why hast Thou forsaken me?"

Ah! It had been written, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Jesus was made a curse for us. God cannot look upon sin: and so when even His own Son was bearing our sins in His body, God could not look upon Him.

I think this is what bore heaviest upon the Savior's heart in the garden when He prayed:

"If it be possible, let this cup pass from me."

He could bear the unfaithfulness of His friends, the spite of His enemies, the pain of His crucifixion, and the shadow of death; He could bear all these; but when it came to the hiding of His Father's face, that

seemed almost too much for even the Son of God to bear. But even this He endured for our sins; and now the face of God is turned back to us, whose sins had turned it away, and looking upon Jesus, the sinless One, He sees us in Him.

In the midst of all His agony, how sweet it must have been to Christ to hear that poor thief confessing Him!

He likes to have men confess Him. Don't you remember His asking Peter, "Whom do men say that I am?" and when Peter answered, "Some people say you are Moses, some people say you are Elias, and some people say you are one of the old Prophets," He asked again, "But, Peter, whom do *you* say I am?" When Peter said, "Thou art the Son of God," Jesus blessed him for that confession. And now this thief confesses Him—confesses Him in the darkness. Perhaps it is so dark he cannot see Him any longer; but he feels that He is there beside him. Christ wants us to confess Him in the dark as well as in the light; when it is hard as well as when it is easy. For He was not ashamed of us, but bore our sins and carried our sorrows, even unto death.

When a prominent man dies, we are anxious to get his last words and acts.

THE LAST ACT OF THE SON OF GOD

was to save a sinner. That was a part of the glory of His death. He commenced His ministry by saving sinners, and ended it by saving this poor thief. "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? But thus saith the Lord: Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the

prey of the terrible shall be delivered." He took this captive from the jaws of death. He was on the borders of hell, and Christ snatched him away.

No doubt Satan was saying to himself: "I shall have the soul of that thief pretty soon. He belongs to me. He has been mine all these years."

But in his last hours the poor wretch cried out to the Lord, and He snapped the fetters that bound his soul, and set him at liberty. He threw him a passport into heaven. I can imagine, as the soldier drove his spear into our Savior's side, there came flashing into the mind of the thief the words of the prophet Zechariah:

"In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness."

You see, in the conversion of this thief, that

SALVATION IS DISTINCT AND SEPARATE FROM WORKS.

Some people tell us we have to work to be saved. What has the man who believes that to say about the salvation of this thief? How could he work, when he was nailed to the cross?

He took the Lord at His word, and believed. It is with the heart men believe, not with their hands or feet. All that is necessary for a man to be saved is to believe with his heart. This thief made a good confession. If he had been a Christian fifty years, he could not have done Christ more service there than he did. He confessed Him before the world; and for nineteen hundred years that confession has been told. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John all recorded it. They felt it so important that they thought we should have it.

See how

SALVATION IS SEPARATE AND DISTINCT FROM ALL ORDINANCES

—not but that ordinances are right in their place. Many people think it is impossible for any one to get into the kingdom of God if he is not baptized into it. I know people who were greatly exercised because little children died unbaptized. I have seen them carry the children through the streets because the pastor could not come. I don't want you to think I am talking against ordinances. Baptism is right in its place; but when you put it in the place of salvation, you put a snare in the way. You cannot baptize men into the kingdom of God. The last conversion before Christ perished on the cross ought to forever settle that question. If you tell me a man cannot get into Paradise without being baptized, I answer, This thief was not baptized. If he had wanted to be baptized, I don't believe he could have found a man to baptize him.

I have known people who had sick relatives, and because they could not get a minister to come to their house and administer the sacrament, they were distressed and troubled. Now, I am not saying anything against the ordinance by which we commemorate the death of our Lord, and remember His return. God forbid! But let me say that it is not necessary for salvation. I might die and be lost before I could get to the Lord's table; but if I get to the Lord I am saved. Thank God, salvation is within my reach always, and I have to wait for no minister. This poor thief certainly never partook of the sacrament. Was there a man on that hill that would have had faith to believe he was saved? Would any church to-day have received

him into membership? He had not to wait for this. The moment he asked life, our Savior gave it.

Baptism is one thing; the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is another thing; and salvation through Christ is quite another thing. If we have been saved through Christ, let us confess Him by baptism, let us go to His table, and do whatever else He bids. But let us not make stumbling-blocks out of these things.

That is what I call sudden conversion—men calling on God for salvation and getting it. You certainly won't get it unless you call for it, and unless you take it when He offers it to you. If you want Christ to remember you—to save you—call upon Him.

TWO SIDES.

The cross of Christ divides all mankind. There are only two sides, those for Christ, and those against Him. Think of the two thieves; from the side of Christ one went down to death cursing God, and the other went to glory.

What a contrast! In the morning he is led out, a condemned criminal; in the evening he is saved from his sins. In the morning he is cursing; in the evening he is singing hallelujahs with a choir of angels. In the morning he is condemned by men as not fit to live on earth; in the evening he is reckoned good enough for heaven. In the morning nailed to the cross; in the evening in the Paradise of God, crowned with a crown he should wear through all the ages. In the morning not an eye to pity; in the evening washed and made clean in the blood of the Lamb. In the morning in the society of thieves and outcasts; in the evening Christ is not ashamed to walk arm-in-

arm with him down the golden pavements of the eternal city.

The thief was

THE FIRST MAN TO ENTER PARADISE

after the veil of the Temple was rent. If we could look up yonder, and catch a glimpse of the throne, we would see the Father there, and Jesus Christ at His right hand; and hard by we would see that thief. He is there to-day. Nineteen hundred years he has been there, just because he cried in faith:

"Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom."

You know Christ died a little while before the thief. I can imagine that He wanted to hurry home to get a place ready for His new friend, the first soul brought from the world He was dying to redeem. The Lord loved him because he confessed Him in that dark hour. It was a dark hour for many who reviled the Savior. You have heard of the child who did not want to die and go to heaven because he didn't know anybody there. But the thief would have one acquaintance. I can imagine how his soul leaped within him when he saw the spear thrust into our Savior's side, and heard the cry:

"It is finished!"

He wanted to follow Christ. He was in a hurry to be gone, when they came to break his legs. I can hear the Lord calling:

"Gabriel, prepare a chariot. Make haste. There is a friend of mine hanging on that cross. They are breaking his legs. He will soon be ready to come. Make haste, and bring him to me?"

The angel in the chariot swept down from heaven,

took the soul of that penitent thief, and hastened back to glory. The gates of the city swung wide open, and the angels shouted welcome to this poor sinner who had been washed white in the blood of the Lamb.

And that, my friends, is just what Christ wants to do for you. That is the business on which He came down from heaven. That is why He died. And if He gave such a swift salvation to this poor thief on the cross, surely He will give you the same if, like the penitent thief, you repent, and confess, and trust in the Savior.

Somebody says that this man "was saved at the eleventh hour." I don't know about that. It might have been the first hour with him. Perhaps he never knew of Christ until he was led out to die beside Him. This may have been the very first time he ever had a chance to know the Son of God.

How many of you gave your hearts to Christ the very first time He asked them of you? Are you not farther along in the day than even that poor thief?

Some years ago, in one of the mining districts of England, a young man attended one of our meetings and refused to go from the place till he had found peace in the Savior. The next day he went down into the pit, and the coal fell in upon him. When they took him out he was broken and mangled, and had only two or three minutes of life left in him. His friends gathered about him, saw his lips moving, and, bending down to catch his words, heard him say:

"It was a good thing I settled it last night."

Settle it now, my friends, once for all. Begin now to confess your sins, and pray the Lord to remember you. He will make you an heir of His kingdom, if you will accept the gift of salvation. He is just the

same Savior the thief had. Will you not cry to Him for mercy?

. . . . . .

A cross,—and one who hangs thereon, in sight
Of heaven and earth.

The cruel nails are fast
In trembling hands and feet, the face is white
And changed with agony, the failing head
Is drooping heavily; but still again,
And yet again, the weary eyes are raised
To seek the face of One who hangeth pale
Upon another cross. He hears no shrill
And taunting voices of the crowd beneath,
He marks no cruel looks of all that gaze
Upon the woeful sight. He sees alone
That face upon the cross. Oh, long, long look,
That searcheth there the deep and awful things
Which are of God!

In his first agony
And horror he had joined with them that spake
Against the Lord, the Lamb, who gave Himself
That day for us. But when he met the look
Of those calm eyes,—he paused that instant; pale
And trembling, stricken to the heart, and faint
At sight of Him.

. . . . . .

At length
The pale, glad lips have breathed the trembling prayer,
"*O Lord, remember me!*" The hosts of God
With wistful angel-faces, bending low
Above their dying King, were surely stirred
To wonder at the cry. Not one of all
The shining host had dared to speak to Him
In that dread hour of woe, when Heaven and Earth
Stood trembling and amazed. Yet, lo! the voice
Of one who speaks to Him, who dares to pray,
"*O Lord, remember me!*" A sinful man

May make his pitiful appeal to Christ,
The sinner's Friend, when angels dare not speak.
And sweetly from the dying lips that day
The answer came.
Oh, strange and solemn joy
Which broke upon the fading face of him
Who there received the promise: "*Thou shalt be*
In Paradise this night, this night, with Me."

. . . . . .

O Christ, the King!
We also wander on the desert-hills,
Though haunted by Thy call, returning sweet
At morn and eve. We will not come to Thee
Till Thou hast nailed us to some bitter cross,
And *made* us look on Thine, and driven at last
To call on Thee with trembling and with tears,—
Thou lookest down in love, upbraiding not,
And promising the kingdom!

. . . . . .

A throne,—and one
Who kneels before it, bending low in new
And speechless joy.

It is the night on earth.
The shadows fall like dew upon the hills
Around the Holy City, but above,
Beyond the dark vale of the sky, beyond
The smiling of the stars, they meet once more
In peace and glory. Heaven is comforted,—
For that strange warfare is accomplished now,
Her King returned with joy: and one who watched
The far-off morning in a prison dim,
And hung at noonday on the bitter cross,
Is kneeling at His feet, and tasteth now
The sweet, sweet opening of an endless joy.

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